

NATIONAL

CONFERENCE

Library Service
for the Blind



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PROCEEDINGS

November 19-20, 1951

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Conference Officers

LUTHER H. EVANS, *Chairman*

VERNER W. CLAPP, *Vice-Chairman*

DONALD G. PATTERSON, *Secretary*

Resolutions Committee

ALFRED ALLEN

JOHN C. L. ANDREASSEN

NELSON COON

FINIS E. DAVIS

HARRY E. SIMMONS, *Chairman*

PROGRAM

Monday, November 19

9–10 a.m. Registration

The Problems

10 a.m.–12:30 p.m. "Objectives of National Conference on Library Service for the Blind"

LUTHER H. EVANS, *Librarian of Congress*

"Selection of Titles for Talking Book Records and Books in Braille"

BLANCHE P. MCCRUM, *Bibliographer, Library of Congress*

"Recording of Talking Books and Printing of Books in Braille"

FINIS E. DAVIS, *Superintendent*

American Printing House for the Blind, Inc.

1–2 p.m. Luncheon—Whittall Pavilion

The Problems

2:30–5:30 p.m. "Free Mailing Privilege for Talking Book Records and Books in Braille"

ROY L. SHERIDAN, *Director, Division of Letter and Miscellaneous Mail, Post Office Department*

"Distribution of Talking Book Machines"

M. ROBERT BARNETT, *Executive Director, American Foundation for the Blind, Inc.*

"Service of Talking Book Records and Books in Braille in the Regional Libraries"

MARGARET M. McDONALD, *Librarian, Henry L. Wolfner Memorial Library for the Blind, St. Louis Public Library*

"Expansion of the Program of Books for the Adult Blind in Terms of Maximum Reader Potential"

ROMAINE MACKIE, *Specialist, Schools for Physically Handicapped, Office of Education, Federal Security Agency*

"Requirements of Space, Equipment, and Personnel in Terms of Existing Service and Future Expansion"

FRANKLIN H. PRICE, *Librarian (retired November 15, 1951)*

CHARLES GALLOZZI, *Head, Books for the Blind, The Free Library of Philadelphia*

PROGRAM

A Look at the Past and the Future

8–10 p.m. "Cavalcade of Communications: Technical Aids for Blind Readers"

Committee: RICHARD K. COOK, *Chief, Sound Section, Mechanics Division, National Bureau of Standards*; EDWARD J. WATERHOUSE, *Director, Perkins Institution*; WILLIAM WATKINS, *Production Engineer, American Printing House for the Blind, Inc.*; CHARLES H. WHITTINGTON, *Executive Assistant, American Foundation for the Blind, Inc.*; LAWRENCE W. GUNTHER, *Assistant Chief, Division for the Blind, Library of Congress, Chairman*

Tuesday, November 20

Some Implementing Programs

9:30–11 a.m. "Hand Transcribing of Books in Braille by Volunteers"

MAYBELLE K. (MRS. WALTER) PRICE, *President, Volunteers Service for the Blind, Inc.*

"Special Recording of Educational and Professional Literature by Volunteers"

MILDRED C. (MRS. JOHN L.) SKINNER, *Chairman, National Committee on Special Recording*

"Program of the National Committee for Recording for the Blind, Inc."

ANNE (MRS. RANALD H., JR.) MACDONALD, *President, National Committee for Recording for the Blind, Inc.*

A Primary Problem

11 a.m.–12:30 p.m. "Development of the Regional Library System and Growth of the Service"

DONALD G. PATTERSON, *Chief, Division for the Blind, Library of Congress*

Discussion of Impact on the Operations of the Expansion in Service

1–2 p.m. Luncheon—Whittall Pavilion

2:30–5 p.m. Resolutions and Summarization

5–7 p.m. Reception—Whittall Pavilion

Objectives of National Conference on Library Service for the Blind

In Dr. Evans' absence, Mr. Verner W. Clapp, the Acting Librarian, welcomed the group on behalf of the Librarian of Congress. He described the background of the library work for the blind in the Library of Congress—the beginnings in 1897 when a room was set aside as a reading room for the blind; the developments on a national scale when in 1918 the Library joined the American Red Cross to sponsor the Volunteer Braille transcribing service; the still greater developments made possible by the Pratt-Smoot Act of 1931 which has enabled the Library to distribute embossed and Talking Books to the blind readers of the country through 28 Regional Libraries. He mentioned some of the problems—of book selection, distribution, weeding and storage, Talking Book machine repair, etc.—which require for settlement an easy discussion between representatives of the Library and others engaged in library service to the blind. These problems, he said, were the reasons for the present meeting.

He stated four objectives of the Conference:

1. To gather together, for the first time, to our knowledge, on a broad scale, the representatives of the different groups participating in the program of Books for the Adult Blind for the purpose of providing an opportunity for the establishing of a closer knit professional relationship, for the exchange of experience and the discussion of mutual problems, for the dissemination of information relating to separate but related aspects of operations, for the improvement of understanding as to individual contribution to overall function, and for the encouragement of a spirit of unity and cooperation by the forming of personal contacts and acquaintanceships.

2. To identify and define through the process of papers and discussion the problems which appear to present the greatest obstacles to effective operations and which have served to perplex those participating in the program, and thereby to provide an improved basis for intelligent attack upon them.

3. To provide a forum in which these problems can be submitted to a group representing a concentration of considerable experience and expert knowledge at different levels and in separate, although related, areas of activity, and in which these problems may be the subject of free discussion and expression of opinion.

4. To solicit suggestions or recommendations representing either individual opinion or more formal expression of group sentiment to which we may give consideration in our administration of the program.

He pointed out that, although the agenda before the Conference was heavy, it was most desirable that this agenda be acted upon in plenary session of all members of the Conference and that there be no breaking up of the group as a whole into working parties or committees. He would agree to only one exception to this. Because it was probable that the group would wish to express its findings and recommendations in some final resolutions, he would appoint a Resolutions Committee to observe the discussion and to report, for action at the final session, such conclusions or recommendations as might best represent the sense of the meetings. For this purpose he designated Messrs. Allen, Coon, Andreassen, Davis, and Simmons.

Selection of Titles for Talking Book Records and Books in Braille

BLANCHE P. MCCRUM, *Bibliographer,*

General Reference and Bibliography Division, Library of Congress

When the Congress of the United States, by its act of March 3, 1931, provided \$100,000 to be spent for books for the adult blind of this country, its island possessions, and its territories, and at the same time specified that available funds should be expended under the direction of the Librarian of Congress, a responsibility, grave indeed, was laid upon the Librarian and his institution. For 20 years this responsibility has been carried, until now it involves the use of an annual allotment of \$1,000,000, a sum resulting from successive amendments to the original basic act.

Distribution of Braille and Talking Book editions, with the services which are a part of that distribution, has been undertaken by 28 Regional Libraries, widely scattered throughout the country and stretching across the sea to Hawaii. No wonder that Dr. Carleton B. Joeckel, formerly of the University of Chicago, has pointed to the whole undertaking as one of the interesting examples of Federal participation in a Nation-wide service. That service deserves the most careful thought, critical review, imaginative innovations, and devoted service from us all. It was, therefore, in recognition of the central place occupied by book selection in this whole important program that Mr. Donald G. Patterson, Chief of the Division for the Blind at the Library of Congress, decided to initiate a study of the policies, principles, methods, and results connected with this phase of the Division's work. By great good fortune, I was detailed to make the study. My assistant, Mr. Hugh R. Waters, and I therefore spent the months of May through August 1951 on our assignment. Our final report, in 130 pages, forms the basis of the material which I am presenting for your consideration today. Limitations of time force me to be highly selective as well as general in what I shall say here. However, a stone cast into a lake creates circles that finally reach the distant shore. The shore we wish to reach lies in a realm of ideas from which we may draw those most fruitful of results for the best possible provision of reading material for the largest possible number of our actual and potential readers. Will you, therefore, treat what follows merely as a point of departure for your own creative thinking?

¹ Text of a paper presented, in briefer form, at the National Conference on Library Service for the Blind. It is based on a study of book selection for the adult blind made by the writer for the Division for the Blind, May to August 1951.

First of all, I should like to state quite baldly two propositions to stimulate such thinking and then to discuss the elements of agreement and of conflict in them. They are as follows:

First Proposition. Blind readers constitute a representative cross section of the total population of the country and a bill of library rights for them must carry provisions that will give them access to the same library resources as those enjoyed by sighted readers.

Second Proposition. The special requirements of blind readers do not correspond to those of patrons served by book selection as it operates in typical public libraries today. Therefore such selection would be unsatisfactory and should be adjusted to meet the demands of an unusual clientele.

Before we winnow the chaff from the wheat of these deliberately contradictory statements, I should like to follow through a few lines of thought which may contribute to our arrival at one statement which embodies truth contained in each proposition.

The concept expressed in the first proposition—that of a library bill of rights for blind readers—grew out of the reading we did in connection with our study. In the course of it we examined first the literature of blindness and sought to orient ourselves in the mental climate of the group represented. This procedure involved moving around as widely as our time and resources permitted among the 3,000 works which, according to an estimate quoted by Chevigny and Braverman in 1950, constitute the corpus of material in all languages on this subject.

From this study we derived a number of prevailing ideas. First, we learned to avoid as the plague the use of such a term as "THE BLIND." We came to understand the folly of thinking of these readers as a conglomerate mass of similar beings. Our blind citizens are people. Among them have been included judges on the bench and prisoners under detention. They are married, have children, write books, make repairs in their homes, cook, go to business every day, practice professions, and like fun and games. It is as silly to apply stereotypes to them in order to determine their reading interests, as it would be to postulate a similarity of reading interests on the part of other persons who may be identified by some common physical characteristics, such as red hair, gray eyes, the loss of a leg, or deafness.

Moreover, blind persons do not wish pity, emotions of charitable beneficence, and the general notion of doing good to poor things, to govern services made desirable by their physical situation. They know they have a hard job to do, defined by one student of the subject as the "major task . . . not of conquering the world but . . . one perhaps equally as great. It is the task of perceiving and refusing to employ as tools . . . feelings of inadequacy, insecurity, and lack of self-assurance." They wish, on the contrary, to emphasize the fact that their group includes a component part of the people of the

United States, whose rights to read are quite as firmly based on justice as those of sighted readers served by libraries of material published in ink print. These sighted readers do their reading to understand themselves, to get along with other people, to keep up with the reading of the Joneses" to have respite from care, anxiety, boredom, to satisfy curiosity, to acquire knowledge useful professionally and vocationally, and to gain security, advancement, cultural satisfaction, vicarious experience, and self-improvement. Blind persons have the same drives that motivate sighted people in their reading and the bill of library rights to which they are entitled must indeed be conceived with the purpose of making their opportunities to read match as nearly as possible analogous opportunities now available to sighted readers. The conclusions of our study rest on this belief as on a firm foundation.

But now we come into the area where facts, preconceived ideas, easy generalizations, long-accepted pronouncements must have applied to them Descartes' well-known method of doubt. Here we begin to consider our second proposition. In this, you will remember, was stated, as a challenge to discussion, the assertion that the special requirements of blind readers prohibit the effective use of book selection as it operates in the typical public library today. How then does it operate in such libraries?

Historically, book selection in the typical American public library has felt the impact of various and often conflicting beliefs concerning the purpose and proper functions of the whole institution. The library has been thought of in turn as the workingman's university, as an agency of social betterment which might be used as a substitute for the barroom and the dance hall, and as the taxpayer's property in which he who pays the tax may also call the tune to which, even if mistakenly, the book selector must dance. Currently, the public library, knowing that it is the only agency dedicated solely to passing on the cultural heritage found in books, appears to have accepted the fact that it cannot do that and at the same time be everything to everyone, according to his heart's desire. Part of this conclusion rests on the fact that other, perhaps less heavily burdened agencies can take over part of the task and carry it through better than the public library could manage to do, even if it did scrap part of its exclusive assignments.

Therefore, in order to fit its book selection to the requirements of its patrons, the public library constantly engages in what, for want of a better word, we may call research in reading interests. Its staff reads and studies the substantial accumulation of published results of research in this field. It engages in community surveys to determine what activities, civic and otherwise, need the support of books and reading. Personnel is carefully assigned to deal with schools and to know the requirements of teachers and pupils. Readers' advisers are provided to act as specialists in assembling useful information on topics of individual as well as general interest. Branches are located in neighborhoods that differ widely from each other. Members of the staff carry on field work in their own districts in order to learn the book needs of the local area. The whole mechanism of book selection, such as reading

books and reviews of books, collecting opinions of specialists, recording readers' interests, and searching the list of books provided by other libraries, is geared to the production of a book collection that will not only satisfy readers' interests but stimulate to profitable activity interests that are latent.

As a result of all this evaluation of reading interests, the public library does not undertake to fritter away its tax dollars in an effort to be absolutely all things to all men. Particularly is this true in areas in which newspapers, magazines, rental libraries, and cheap reprints sold in drug stores and other commercial establishments meet a mass demand forever beyond the public library's ability to satisfy. The latter, therefore, tends to provide those substantial and reliable works from the past without which there can be neither information nor knowledge, and the books of the present that seem to promise the best survival value. Token collections are added to satisfy as wide a range of interests as possible. But if I understand aright the purpose towards which the public library is beginning to hold most steadily today, it is that of concentrating on the provision of materials which no other agency exists to supply.

At this point we must stop and ask how satisfactory such library service promises to be for blind readers who, unless and until electronic and other devices for reading directly from ink print are perfected, will remain cut off from everything except as material is supplied by Braille and Talking Book reproductions. How do we know, moreover, what some 253,000 actual and potential blind readers want if we lack information comparable to that possessed by the typical public library serving sighted readers? The answer certainly is that we sorely lack basic information as to sex, age, education, economic condition, and professional and vocational affiliations, all of which are fundamental factors in establishing sound book selection policies for sighted readers.

In our recent study of book selection for blind readers we had access to the opinions of 4,100 readers and specialists in the field. While it is probable that available records represented the opinions of persons keenly interested and therefore part of a top-level of elite readers, the material was sufficiently diversified to be exceedingly valuable. I must pause here and interject an expression of warm appreciation of replies sent to Mr. Patterson's circular letter of July 27, addressed to 193 readers, librarians, and leaders of work for the blind. These communications gave encouraging evidence of keen perceptions and willingness to inaugurate or participate in research leading to the production of more adequate data than we now possess. In the absence of those data, in a form currently useful, what preliminary conclusions may be drawn from the primary sources available to us in records of the Division for the Blind at the Library of Congress, in readers' requests, in correspondence, in the files referred to above, and in three or four miscellaneous studies, only one of which has been published?

First of all, these sources revealed the marked differences of opinion that exist among blind readers themselves, and also among the librarians who serve

them. They therefore indicate the tensions under which the book selector in this field must work. Foremost among these is the demand by blind readers for fresh, new, well-known books, *now*. If these are not supplied before the decline of the advertising campaign that, all too often, is responsible for the popularity of the books, the readers tend to forget they ever wanted the books in question. Indeed, when at long last the books come, readers may even feel aggrieved because, obviously, they are not what the reviewers claimed for them. The public library for sighted readers is not placed in this dilemma, since its policy, established well in advance, is one of compromise, and of care in protecting itself from mass acquisitions of books with inflated but unproved reputations, better provided through rental libraries.

Again, a typical public library is slow to censor a book of genuine literary quality unless it is deliberately lewd, pornographic, or offensive. It is true, possibly as both a cause and a symptom of the mental and moral confusion of the present age, that much of the best writing of today is controversial in theme, unconventional in episode, and at times profane in language. The typical public library for sighted readers does not go out of its way to purge all such books from its shelves, although it is probable that they are overbalanced successfully by the accretions resulting from years of selecting books written under the influence of different and, I personally believe, better values. Most sighted readers, however, accept the fact that in books as in life, what is one man's meat is another man's poison. They therefore rub along fairly comfortably by returning books to the library if they fail to please, and following up leads to other books holding brighter promise of satisfaction. Blind readers, however, often object strongly to the provision of *any* book with which they themselves are not satisfied.

It is perfectly understandable that all blind readers would like access to all available books, which are all too few. But if they receive selections that, as they feel, are objectional, when what they wanted was something which, under the special conditions of reading by touch and by ear, is entirely acceptable to their taste, they are at times displeased and tend to see only their own side of the question. They believe they are on the side of the angels and they remember the admonition of the Scriptures: ". . . whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely . . . think on these things." They wish to hold fast to clean, unobjectionable, kind books and to let problems alone.

On the other hand, a substantial number, particularly among young men, feel thoroughly irked unless they are able to read according to the taste of their own generation. They are, so they say, asking only for what any sighted reader has access to in a normal public library, and they wish to learn for themselves what other people of their time are doing and thinking and to form their own judgments of prevalent ideas. They want to think when they read and are not at all interested in having their choice of books automatically skewed by a selection policy that is "fixed" in advance in the direction of sweetness and light.

Between these two extremes there are many honest differences of opinion. Perhaps two-thirds of the blind population are over 60 years of age, a grouping by age quite different from that represented by the clientele of a typical public library. With the lengthening of the life span and the increased proportion of older people in our contemporary society, this age is no longer considered so close to the period marked by labor and sorrow. But a convention certainly exists concerning these older blind readers and has been urged on the book selector; namely, that blind readers of this age read predominantly for diversion and escape. Of course Mr. Justice Holmes did read Plato at the age of 92, or thereabouts, to improve his mind, and we have had the privilege of meeting blind readers who follow in his footsteps. But in general the belief persists that readers of this age desire pleasant, easy, diverting books, and that since such readers are numerically predominant, the prevailing direction of selection should be towards their interests. There are all too few top-notchers in this *genre* of writing, and the book selector beats his breast trying to find respectable writing joined to the contents as demanded.

Readers who are more intellectually inclined, when they observe what has been added to the collection to meet the situation just described, say indignantly that book selection for blind readers has gone over to the Philistines and that public money is being thrown away on trash. They advocate as the first responsibility of the selector the creation of a substantial stock of basic background books in all the subject fields by the use of which an inquiring mind, whether highly trained by formal education or not, may inform itself. They insist with all possible force that education for the blind individual must not stop at the school or college gateway, and that the means of continuing his education all through his life must be made available through the only channel open to him, his library service. Proponents of this school of thought shudder to learn that a relatively simple question on economic theory could not be answered from sources now available in Braille or on Talking Books. These critics, I believe, would heartily endorse the concept of the public library stated earlier as that of the only agency devoted exclusively to passing on the cultural heritage.

My own conscience is most uneasy on account of the poverty of material useful to another group; namely, newly blinded persons, 25 to 35 years of age perhaps, who have heavy economic responsibilities for their families and themselves. Long lives lie ahead of them, and their value to society, not to mention satisfaction to themselves, depends upon their social, psychological, and vocational adjustments to purposeful and productive living. As a long-time student of book selection, and as one who has for years at a stretch paid special attention to the difficulties of slow readers and of foreigners not yet comfortable in English, I have been made keenly aware of the poverty of adult material which is interesting in content but sufficiently lucid and brief to be read without an agony of effort by slow readers. Books of that kind are neither immediate in their popular appeal nor heavy with scholarship; and since they fall out of the categories of most obvious interest to commercial publishers, they remain scarce as hens' teeth. It occurs to me that no more useful enterprise could

engage the attention of the persons at this Conference than the search for material of the kind, whether already published or not, with a view to making it speedily available in Braille and Talking Books.

In the foregoing pages I have tried to indicate a few of the conflicts with which the book selector in this field must work before he can share with the Deity the joy of looking at his creation and seeing that it is good enough to satisfy him. It is perfectly true that many readers—the majority to whose opinions we had access—approved in principle of the policies of selection being applied. A number of them gave moving expressions of appreciation of the devoted and prolonged efforts which have made possible a collection of books for blind readers. But the whole problem is too important for the book selector to cease from mental strife until he has won through to the safest ground on which he can find to stand. In this connection, I should like to describe a few of the lions in the path that must be killed off or tamed before he is completely satisfied.

First among these hazards, I would mention the difficulty of creating an adequate stockpile of titles. During the 21 years that the program has been in action, sighted readers have had offered to them in Great Britain and the United States alone nearly half a million titles, exclusive of additional masses of documents, learned publications, and other highly specialized works. In the same length of time, the Division for the Blind in the Library of Congress has found it possible to assemble a pitiful handful of less than 5,500 titles in both Braille and Talking Book reproductions. Moreover, the hope for the future is no brighter, so long as it costs over \$600 to produce one Braille edition and more than \$3,000 to reproduce a Talking Book in some 120 copies. I am well aware of the magnificent program carried on by volunteer hand copyists for the reproduction of books that minister to special needs and interests, and also of all that may be hoped from the completion of the union catalog of titles so produced, which is now in progress. But I am referring above to the provision of books made possible by the use of allocated funds.

Another discouragement which the selector must fight is his inability to get the current material he has selected into the only form his patrons can read. This long lag in the production of books for blind readers is the result of many causes. First comes the process of screening annually from some 21,000 titles the few hundred that can be reproduced by the use of available funds. Here the Division follows the standard techniques of book selection used in public libraries: subscription to book reviewing services and journals; consultation of experts; study of published lists showing the operation of selection in other public libraries; and prolonged personal reading and study. Not long ago one request for the reproduction of a book led to the examination of 16 additional titles to make sure that, if published in the desired medium, the book really would be the best that could be secured.

Following the preliminary screening comes the listing and annotating that results in a record of possible choices made available to the 50 persons on the Advisory Group of readers and librarians. These constitute a committee that

assists the Librarian of Congress and his staff by voting on titles to be reproduced, and whose members thus provide for "reading with representation," rather than without it. When votes come back and are tabulated, and the list of selections has been boiled down to suitable proportions, the result goes on to the reproducers. There the titles finally selected take their place on the belt line of production, from which they finally reach the distributing libraries. Is it any wonder that the whole operation is a long one? We are told that current books are great morale builders; but, alas, the book selector can do a good job only if he takes time enough to follow through to reasonable certainty, while his feeling of guilt because of delay continues to harry him.

Third, the staff to implement the use of such books as are provided is inadequate. Last year out of \$1,000,000 the budget for staff salaries in the Division for the Blind was something over \$69,000, or less than 7 percent of the whole. But if you will scan the budgets of representative public libraries which are giving satisfactory service to sighted readers, I shall be surprised if you do not find that allocations for staff salaries tend to range from 60 to 70 percent of the total budget, while the budget for books may use 10 to 15 percent of the total. These public libraries that spend much for services and less for books are not fly-by-night institutions. City fathers do not like to enlarge their pay rolls, and the proportional allotment constitutes a recognition from them of the fact that books do not march down from library shelves and into the hands of persons who need them. Far from it. A book collection has to be mobilized, made active, and related to the requirements of the clientele to be served. Staff members who are bogged down in routine procedures, and who have their backs broken by the load of clerical work under which most of us who are librarians stagger, cannot write cordial letters, recommendations of more satisfying books than those overpraised by reviewers, and informative analyses of a list of books grouped around a given topic of interest to the patron. Yet lacking such attention, many a patron, as well as the librarian who wishes to serve him, must get along strictly as best he can.

The last hazard which I have time to mention is concerned with the obvious difficulty of conducting by mail a service given by librarians who, as a group, are geographically separated from each other and from their readers also. This is a very young service compared to public library service in general and I believe it suffers from a lack of opportunity for persons giving the service to come together for fellowship and counsel, or to be in close touch with book selection at the Library of Congress. The public at large also suffers because the many facets of this most interesting and absorbing work are never intellectually apprehended, however much they may be emotionally applauded. As I see it, there is great need for strengthening the bonds between individual specialists who provide the service and for an extension of the whole idea throughout the library profession and to the intelligent citizen. Through these two channels there can be provided streams of interest and support that will greatly enrich the whole program.

In the light of all the considerations before us, what then should be our

conclusions? Do they warrant pessimism and resignation? By no means. As I see it, what we have to fear most is an attitude of acceptance and a mistaken belief that the difficulties are indeed insurmountable. We may with confidence accept as final the proposition that blind readers comprise an important cross section of the total population and are entitled to a library bill of rights which will meet their general and special requirements as adequately as those of sighted readers are met by the use of public funds. But the fact remains that the book selector does not have access to enough objective data about his clientele, about what the present non-reader would read if it were offered to him, and about the reasons why the actual and the potential number of readers remains so far apart, to satisfy his own high standards of work. For that reason I wish to leave with you, for your consideration, four proposals which, on the basis of our study, seem to me to be in order. These are my own. They are not derived from suggestions received at the Library of Congress, and no general acceptance of them by this Library is implied. Believe me, that in the traditional phrase, they are respectfully submitted, with an abiding sense of privilege because it has been my good fortune to work, even briefly, in one of the most challenging of all library specializations. My proposals are as follows:

Proposal One.—That a Council on Research in the Reading Interests of Blind Persons be constituted, with responsibility for stimulating, coordinating, and making available original work in the field, in order that book selection for these patrons may rest on a firm foundation of objective studies of the kind at present unavailable.

Proposal Two.—That a Publications Committee be formed to explore the possibility of supplementing books in print by direct writing for publication in Braille and/or Talking Books with the particular requirements of vocational workers, beginning students of Braille, and slow readers in mind.

Proposal Three.—That the importance of library work for blind readers and the professional stimulus of librarians for the blind be brought much more prominently to the attention of the whole library profession than it has been brought in the past, and that state, regional, and national library meetings be used for this purpose.

Proposal Four.—That the Library of Congress be encouraged to seek the means for adding to its book selection activities those directed to improving the use of existing book stock through the addition to its staff of a readers' advisory service and a library field representative, both to cement the bonds of interest between individual readers and books and between regional libraries and the Library of Congress.

Summary of Discussion Following Miss McCrum's Paper

Considerable discussion was devoted to existing policies and procedures in the Division for the Blind for selection of titles to be reproduced for the

publishing program. It was explained that a tentative list of titles is chosen by the Selections Officer in the Division from publishers' catalogs, book lists, review publications, etc., for submission quarterly to an Advisory Group composed of 50 librarians and readers, some sighted and some blind. The final selection has reflected the opinion of this group quite substantially, although the Division reserves the right to make selections from titles initiated by Advisory Group members, by individual readers, by Regional Librarians, and other sources. Of course, the whole operation is inevitably governed by limitation of funds.

The Advisory Group, in addition to approving or rejecting titles, indicates whether specific titles should be produced in recorded form or raised characters. Generally, Talking Books are more suitable for recreational reading and Braille for informational reading. Some flexibility obtains, however, as some nonfiction is done in both Talking Book form and Braille. In either category, as wide reader interest as possible is a governing consideration. The over-all policy is to select books that *will* be read, although in doing so an effort is also made to secure books that *should* be read.

Book selection in general and the principles governing those methods also received much attention. It was brought out that familiarity with the books themselves, sources of information about them, were as important as knowing the clientele. Since the interests of blind readers, it was conceded, do not differ materially from those of sighted readers, profitable use might be made of the usual research and findings of public librarians on readers.

The comment was made that readers' polls have to a great degree been found unreliable when translated into what those readers actually want. Some recognition was also given to the obvious difficulties in trying to understand the expressed wishes of individual readers' choice, since the opinions often proved so disparate as to make fitting them into a practical pattern difficult.

Two suggestions were offered on making an analysis of readers' interests. One was that a study be made of circulation statistics of the regional libraries in terms of classification of materials loaned, biography, fiction, etc., for the purpose of determining the basis of actual demand. The other was the possibility of more precise evaluation of readers' interests by surveying the requests rather than the items circulated. An increase in the proportion of fiction was proposed, but the proposal, as registered in a hand vote of Regional Librarians present failed to gain support. There was general agreement as to the need for more research among readers on the matter of book selection.

Considerable sentiment for the inclusion of childrens' books in regional collections was expressed, especially by Regional Librarians. The position of the Library of Congress was explained as being sympathetic to such a demand, but, because the Library is under legal compulsion to administer the law authorizing the program in terms of the enactment, and since the authorization is to provide reading material for the adult blind, such limitation in language precludes the extension of the program to include juvenile literature.

Consideration was given to the practice, routine in some of the Regional Libraries, of substituting books of similar character or content, or from a known category of interest, when the specific titles requested are not available. The practice was both criticised and defended.

The discussion concluded with consideration of proposals for: (1) A Council on Research in the Reading Interests of Blind Persons, (2) a Publications Committee to supplement books in print with original material for production in recorded form or raised characters, (3) systematic means for securing more and improved publicity for library work for the blind, and (4) developing a readers' advisory service to serve as liaison between the individual blind using Regional Libraries and between the Regional Libraries and the Library of Congress.

Problems in Producing Talking Book Records and the Printing of Books in Braille

FINIS E. DAVIS, Superintendent
American Printing House for the Blind, Inc.

Before presenting this paper, I should like to congratulate the Library of Congress on taking the initiative in sponsoring this National Conference of representatives of various groups which provide reading matter for the blind of the United States and its territories. It is my opinion we will have a much better understanding of the over-all program and that an improved service in providing literature for the blind will be developed as a result of this meeting.

In accepting this topic I thought at first this would be an excellent opportunity to tell somebody just a few of the many headaches which the various producers of Braille and Talking Books have in the actual production processes from day-to-day. Later, I was told the problem presented should be in relationship to work with the Library of Congress in producing Government orders. Of course, these new instructions took away a great deal of my enthusiasm for preparing this paper, because most of the problems requiring aspirin come in securing materials, production processes, personnel and plant operation. Due to the fine spirit of cooperation which has existed between the Library of Congress and the producers of literature for the blind during the past several years, most of the problems have been worked out in a satisfactory manner. However, in contacting the other producers of Braille and Talking Books, I find there are a few problems of mutual interest which could be considered to good advantage from the point of Braille and Talking Book publishers. I am pleased to represent this group in presenting them at this time.

Problems in Talking Book Production

1. An important and long-considered problem is the formulation of rather complete specifications for production of records. Such specifications will assure that all recording sources of Talking Book records will record at approximately the same frequency response, characteristic groove shape, spacing, and the like.

This will also permit the design of a Talking Book machine to reproduce more uniformly and more naturally all recorded voices on Talking Books. Otherwise, a reproducer rendering a pleasing response to one recorded voice may not do so to other recorded voices from the same or another studio.

Uniform recording standards will afford Talking Book readers the greatest enjoyment possible from all records. In this connection, I should like to state that the Library of Congress has already arranged with the Bureau of Standards to develop new record specifications.

2. To effect a more uniform flow of work through the plant, it would be helpful for each individual producer of Talking Books to have a general idea of the amount of work expected for each 12 months' period with recording awards approximately each 3 months and at least 6 months in advance. This would permit adequate time to secure ink-print copies, copyright permissions, and the assigning of books to the particular readers that would do the best job. Maximum efficiency and production economy is effected when the personnel on the regular payroll can be gainfully occupied every week of the year.

3. It is difficult to portray properly the meaning in Talking Book form of some of the awarded books. Some contain columns of tabulated data, tables, and diagrams; in others, Latin and Greek are very predominant. This requires considerable editing and some deletions. Some examples of such books are listed as follows:

Insurance by ALBERT A. MOWBRAY

Autobiography of Robert H. Millikan

Dragons in Amber by WILLY LEY

Occasionally some books are very difficult to find, even at O'Malley's Book Store in New York which specializes in locating scarce books. Some copyright permissions are difficult to obtain, infrequently impossible.

Example: *The Conqueror* by GERTRUDE ATHERTON

4. Filling of fragmentary orders presents some problem. Limited stock and expense of repressing contributes to this. It has been found economically unfeasible to make a setup for less than 5 pressings.

5. Storage space for stock records, Library of Congress overruns for Washington, and copper masters and mothers is at present an unsolved problem. Long-term planning must be given to this soon to make adequate provision for the future.

6. Many books of records have been returned to the American Printing House showing careless handling. Examples are as follows:

A. Groove noise excessive if played with bent, broken, or worn needle or one with wrong tip radius.

B. Needle scratches resulting from pickup arm skidding across record.

C. Many books of records returned are found to be warped and bent, and portray evidence of surface softening by the imprint of the envelope on the recorded surface. This is particularly true during the winter season and is very definite evidence that the whole carton of records has been subjected to extreme heat either in the mails, at the reader's home, or possibly in the library itself.

Perhaps a warning label, if permitted on the outside of the carton, would help minimize this condition.

- D. Holes in records resulting from pickup arm with needle falling on the record. Probably the greatest help in record preservation can be effected through continued emphasis of using the proper tip radius needle and changing this needle before it becomes appreciably worn.

We understand from some blind readers around Louisville that no longer are the steel needles supplied in the carton of records. Many of these readers have semipermanent needles requiring less frequent changing, but they are uninformed as to the source of needle replacement. Continued and repeated recorded and written instructions regarding use of proper needles and record care might well produce fruitful results. This could logically both minimize replacement records and make possible greater enjoyment of listening to succeeding blind readers.

Problems in Braille Production

1. There are some justifications for reviewing specifications for embossing of books. The Braille problems include settling differences of points of view with regard to line and cell-spacing, over-all page size, number of lines per page, placement of running heads and page numbers, and volume size. I believe a study of preferences of the readers for cell and line-spacing and placement of running heads and page numbers should be made before any changes in this connection are approved. The study should be made by a competent group, as is being done by the Bureau of Standards in preparing specifications for Talking Book records. Possibly such a study could be referred to the already existing Joint Uniform Braille Committee of the American Association of Instructors of the Blind and the American Association of Workers for the Blind.

The most economical and best specifications on these points should be adopted and be required of all of the presses. I also think the hand transcribers should conform to the same specifications, particularly with regard to over-all page and volume size, in order to make for uniformity of volumes for shelving and mailing convenience by the libraries unless the regulation would impose some undue hardship on hand transcribers with which I am not familiar.

2. All problems relating to the Braille code, syllabification, etc., should be referred to the same special study group for consideration along with over-all specifications.

3. It would be most helpful to all the contracting printers if the Library of Congress could set up a balanced schedule of work at the beginning of each fiscal year—for the entire year—so that each individual printer or press could have a general idea of the amount of work to be expected from it for the 12 months' period. This information is needed by the presses so that they can keep a trained staff of workers. In some instances, Braille embossing for

example, it takes several months to train an operator to handle accurately even semitechnical work. If the volume of work varies sufficiently to require fluctuation of personnel in specialized work, it is a distinct disadvantage to the printer.

4. It has been suggested by one of the producers of Braille, and I am in agreement, that it would be desirable for the Library of Congress to request uniform bids from the presses, on a blanket basis for each six months' period, as is now done with Talking Books. On this basis, the Library could know fairly exactly how many titles could be done in a year by getting individual page counts from the presses on the books awarded to them. When using blanket bids, it should be understood that the prices actually charged for finished work would be revised from the estimates to the actual cost based on the finished pagings, so that the Library of Congress is charged what the work cost, and the presses neither lose nor make a profit because of inaccurate estimates.

In connection with Braille bids, the blanket bid should be based on:

Cost per page (including embossing, proofreading, printing, folding, collating, and sewing).

Cost per binding (including everything beyond sewing—or ringing in the case of the limited type binding).

Cost for marking indexes and making diagrams—on a per hour basis.

The above suggested per page cost would be based on simple copy, and the printers should have the right to raise this price for more difficult embossing jobs, such as an increase in cost over the blanket minimum—the price scale being noted when the page estimate is sent to the Library of Congress.

5. It would be most helpful if the libraries and other agencies receiving materials from the producers of Braille and Talking Books would check shipments immediately upon receipt of materials and report shortages or damages to the carrier and the supplier. In some instances, we have received reports of damage and shortages as long as 6 months after receipt of the shipment. The carriers permit a 15-day period to report damage or loss. After this time nothing can be done to collect indemnity.

In conclusion, I wish to thank the American Foundation for the Blind, the Braille Institute of America, the Clovernook Publishing House, and the Howe Press for their fine spirit of cooperation in sending in their problems to be included in this report.

Summary of Discussion Following Mr. Davis' Paper

Two means of most effectively providing blind readers with instructions in the operation of the reproducer and use of needles were suggested: an informational record to accompany each machine, and a letter of instruction for each new recipient of a machine. A librarian who has been using the latter method said that general instructions on the use of the library, information on applying for books, use of the inkprint catalogs, etc., accompany the record.

Some confusion was evident in the use of needles. Semipermanent needles are used in all current models whereas packages of steel needles are provided with some of the older models. It was pointed out that no needle, semipermanent or otherwise, will perform with complete satisfaction if susceptible to turning or being otherwise tampered with after the original installation. Exercise of great care in handling the needles was stressed.

It was indicated that the use of commercial long-playing records on Government machines and conversely of the use of commercial playback machines for playing the Government Talking Book records needs clarification. The discussion ended with consideration of the possible impact upon the program of a general acceptance of World Braille and the work of the Joint Committee on Uniform Braille.

Free Mailing Privilege for Talking Book Records and Books in Braille

ROY L. SHERIDAN, *Director*

Division of Letter and Miscellaneous Mail, Post Office Department

It is indeed a pleasure to attend this National Conference on Library Service for the Blind and represent the Post Office Department on your program. I bring to you greetings and well wishes for a successful meeting from the Postmaster General and his staff. The administration of the various laws providing mailing benefits for blind persons is under the immediate cognizance of the of the Division of Letter and Miscellaneous Mail, Bureau of Finance, Post Office Department, Hon. Osborne A. Pearson, Assistant Postmaster General, in charge of the Bureau of Finance, is keenly interested in this subject and directed that I convey his hopes that the Conference would be a successful one and lead to future meetings of this character. I personally am grateful to Mr. Patterson for his thoughtfulness in inviting the Department to participate here as I believe such participation will give me and my associates a better understanding of your mailing problems.

Over 50 years ago Congress enacted the first law providing a special mailing privilege for sightless persons. The act of March 7, 1899, which was the initial legislation of this character provided for the acceptance as third-class mail of unsealed letters written in point print or raised characters used by the blind. This provided a benefit in that such matter was acceptable at the rate of 1 cent for each 2 ounces or fraction thereof, whereas the regular letter rate at that time was 2 cents an ounce. Since that time Congress has enacted various laws extending mailing benefits which are helpful to those handicapped by blindness. While everyone in attendance at this Conference is no doubt familiar with one or several of the special mailing privileges for the blind, probably you are not cognizant of all of the special mailing benefits authorized by law. Therefore, with the thought that it may be helpful in connection with some of your activities, I am going to present here a brief summary of the postal laws and regulations currently in effect on this subject.

Letters

Any letter written in point print or raised characters or on sound reproduction records used by the blind may be mailed at the third-class rate of postage which is 2 cents for the first 2 ounces and 1 cent for each additional ounce.

There is no special endorsement required on the wrapper or cover of such letters. However, such pieces may not be sealed against postal inspection.

Reading Matter for the Blind

This privilege is widely used and probably provides the greatest benefit to the largest percentage of blind persons. Doubtless most of you are familiar with the provisions of the law authorizing the free mailing of reading matter for the blind. However, let us review briefly the regulations regarding such mailings. Books, pamphlets and other reading matter published either in raised characters or in the form of sound reproduction records for the use of the blind *which contain no advertising or other matter* in unsealed packages may be sent free of postage by public institutions for the blind or public libraries as a loan to blind readers or when returned by the latter to the loaning institutions or libraries. The limit of weight for such packages is 15 pounds each. By way of emphasis let me repeat that this free mailing privilege is limited to the type of reading matter described when sent as a loan—not as a gift or sale—to a blind reader or when returned by him to the loaning public library or institution. Each package mailed free of postage under this provision must bear in the upper left corner of the envelope, wrapper or address label the name and address of the sender; that is, the name and address of the loaning institution when first mailed or the name and address of the blind person when returned—and in the upper right corner the word “FREE” over the words “Reading Matter for the Blind” or “Sound Reproduction Records for the Blind.” No special permit is required nor is any written application necessary for the privilege of mailing matter free under this section, it only being necessary that the requirements stated be met.

Periodicals for the Blind

The law provides for the mailing of two categories of periodicals for the blind. First, magazines, periodicals and other regularly issued publications in raised characters or on sound reproduction records for the use of the blind *which contain no advertising and for which no subscription fee is charged* may be mailed free of postage. Before a publication may be mailed free under this provision it is required that the publisher file with the Post Office Department through the Postmaster at the office where mailings are to be made a written application accompanied with a copy of the publication. Notice is then given by the Assistant Postmaster General, Bureau of Finance, of the approval or denial of the application. The application shall include the name and address of the publication, the periods of issue, whether it contains advertising and whether a subscription fee is charged. It is required that on the first page of the publication there be printed the following: (a) the name of the publication, (b) place where published, (c) date of issue, (d) frequency of issue and (e) the words “Entered at the post office at (name of city and state) under section 37.23, P. L. and R., as free matter for the use of the blind.” In the case of a

publication on sound reproduction records such indicia may be printed on labels affixed to the records.

Second. Periodicals for the blind for which a subscription charge is made may not be mailed free of postage but magazines, periodicals and other regularly issued publications in raised characters or on sound reproduction records for the use of the blind *which contain no advertising* and when furnished by an organization, institution or association not conducted for profit to a blind person at a price not greater than the cost price thereof are acceptable at the rate of 1 cent for each pound or fraction. Prior to mailing at that special rate a written application must be submitted to the Post Office Department through the postmaster at the office where mailings are to be made. This application must be accompanied by satisfactory evidence that the mailing organization is not conducted for private profit and that the copies of the publication will be furnished to a blind individual at a price not exceeding the cost price thereof. Notice is duly given by the Assistant Postmaster General, Bureau of Finance, of approval or denial of the application. Matter mailed at this special rate shall bear the endorsement "Periodicals for the Blind—Act of April 15, 1937" below the name and address of the sender which must appear in the upper left corner of the address side of the envelope, wrapper or address label.

Holy Scriptures

Since 1924 special mailing privileges have been available for volumes of Holy Scriptures or parts thereof mailed for the blind. Under the law volumes of Holy Scriptures or any parts thereof published in raised characters or in the form of sound reproduction records for the use of the blind *which contain no advertising* and when furnished by an organization, institution or association not conducted for private profit to a blind person without charge are acceptable in the mails free of postage. It is required that any organization which desires to mail such matter free under this provision must file a written application to the Post Office Department through the postmaster at the office where mailings are to be made. Such application shall contain satisfactory evidence that the organization is not conducted for private profit and that the material will be mailed to a blind person without charge. Notice of approval or denial of the application is furnished by the Assistant Postmaster General, Bureau of Finance. Packages mailed under this provision shall bear in the upper left corner of the address side of the envelope, wrapper or address label the name and address of the sender over the words "Holy Scriptures for the Blind—Act of June 7, 1924, section 37.24, P. L. & R." and in the upper right corner the word "Free."

Where mailers can not meet the requirements for mailing such matter free of postage, mailings thereof can frequently be made at a reduced rate of postage. Volumes of Holy Scriptures or parts thereof published in raised characters or in the form of sound reproduction records for the use of the blind which contain no advertising and are furnished by an organization, institution or association not conducted for private profit to a blind person at a price not greater than

the cost price thereof are acceptable in the mails at the rate of 1 cent for each pound or fraction thereof. A written application for the privilege of mailing at this rate must be submitted through the local postmaster and evidence shall be furnished that the mailing organization is not conducted for private profit and that the material will be furnished to a blind person at a price not exceeding the cost thereof. Notice of the action on the application is furnished the postmaster by the Assistant Postmaster General, Bureau of Finance. Packages mailed under this provision shall bear in the upper left corner of the address side of the envelope, wrapper or address label the name and address of the sender over the words "Holy Scriptures for the Blind—Act of June 7, 1924, section 37.24, Postal Laws and Regulations." Proper postage shall be affixed in the upper right corner. Frequent requests are made for authorization to mail Bible lessons, prayer books, or other types of religious material under the provisions for Holy Scriptures. The law makes no provision for such matter. Therefore, the Department has no discretion in the matter but must restrict mailings to actual copies of the Bible or parts thereof.

Reproducers for Sound Reproduction Records and Appliances for the Blind

For mailing purposes the law places appliances for the blind in two categories; namely, those owned by the Federal Government and those owned by blind individuals, states, nonprofit private agencies, etc.

Reproducers for sound reproduction records for the blind or parts thereof which are the property of the United States Government when *shipped for repair purposes* only by a blind person or by an organization, institution, public library or association for the blind not conducted for private profit to an agency not conducted for private profit or from such an agency to a blind person or a nonprofit organization, institution, public library or association for the blind are mailable at the rate of 1 cent per pound or fraction. Matter mailed under this provision is acceptable only when sent for repair or returned after repair and must bear the name and address of the sender in the upper left corner of the address side of the envelope, wrapper or address label below which must appear the inscription:

"Appliance for the Blind
Sent for Repair
Section 37.26(a) P. L. & R."

The act of September 7, 1949, extended this special rate to certain appliances other than Government-owned regardless of the purpose for which mailed. Under this provision reproducers for sound reproduction records for the blind or parts thereof, Braille writers and other appliances for the blind or parts thereof belonging to blind individuals, state governments, subdivisions thereof, or public libraries or nonprofit private agencies are mailable at the rate of 1

cent per pound or fraction. Parcels mailed under this provision must bear the name and address of the sender in the upper left corner of the address side of the envelope, wrapper or address label below which must appear the words:

"Appliance for the Blind
Sec. 37.26(b) P. L. & R."

Postage in each instance shall be affixed to the upper right corner.

International Mail

The foregoing special mailing benefits do not apply to matter for the blind sent to foreign countries. However, there is a special classification for certain matter sent in the international mails. Matter written in raised characters, prepared on sound recordings for the blind or on plates bearing characters for the use of the blind is acceptable in the international mails at the rate of 1 cent for each 2 pounds 3 ounces or fraction thereof. Such parcels must be sent unsealed and may not weigh more than 15 pounds 6 ounces. Sound recordings to be mailable under this provision must be sent by an officially recognized institution for the blind or addressed to such an institution. Articles sent under this classification must bear the endorsement "Printed Matter for the Blind."

That gives you a summary of the various types of postal benefits available for the benefit of blind persons. As this is a conference on library service for the blind, the principal interest of this group in the utilization of the Postal Service in your work pertains to the mailing of books, either prepared on Talking Book records or in Braille, as a loan to blind readers as well as the mailing of various types of appliances for the blind, mainly reproducers for sound reproduction records. Therefore, it might be helpful to discuss the manner in which books and machines are accepted for mailing. Books, including Talking Books, mailed under the conditions outlined when sent as a loan to a blind reader or when returned to the loaning agency are acceptable free of postage whereas the sound reproducers meeting the established requirements as to ownership may be mailed at the rate of 1 cent for each pound or fraction thereof. Occasionally we receive an inquiry from a volunteer worker who has prepared reading material in Braille and believes he should be entitled to mail such matter free. The law makes no provision for any mailing benefit in such cases. Parcels containing reading matter for the blind or machines should bear the full name and address of the addressee, as well as the name and address of the sender, together with appropriate endorsement on the label or wrapper to describe the contents. When prepared in this manner, the packages are acceptable for mailing at a post office, postal station or by a rural carrier if the mailer lives on a rural route. The books, of course, go free of postage whereas proper postage must be affixed to packages containing the machines. Proper packaging is essential. Each parcel should be presented at a post office window or to the rural carrier.

The Postal Service, of course, has no responsibility in seeing that borrowers return books, and where I speak of books I refer to the various types of reading matter including records to the loaning agency. We simply accept such matter for mailing in the same manner as we accept any parcel, the only difference being the postage chargeable. The borrower should follow the packaging and labeling arrangement used by the loaning organization and his name and address should appear in the upper left corner of the address label. I understand some organizations furnish properly prepared labels for the return of borrowed books, etc., which is a splendid idea as it facilitates the prompt return by making it easier for the individual to mail the article. The borrower should, of course, arrange for the presentation of the parcel at a post office or postal station or if living on a rural route to the carrier. Reports are occasionally received of instances where a postal employee or rural carrier has declined to accept borrowed books, records, etc., for return free of postage or appliances for return at the special rate of postage provided therefor. Such instances are usually due to a misunderstanding or lack of knowledge of the regulations by the postal employee due to the fact that mailings of this character are infrequent at many places. This is understandable when it is considered that during the fiscal year 1950 over 45 billion pieces of mail were handled by the Postal Service and of that total there were only 2,380,000 pieces of matter of all types mailed free for the blind and only 48,000 pieces mailed at the special 1-cent-a-pound rate. In any instance where difficulty is encountered in mailing matter for the blind the Department will be pleased to take appropriate action upon receipt of a letter outlining the circumstances.

I want to assure each one here that the Department is very much interested in the fine work you are doing and we are anxious to cooperate in solving any problems which may develop in connection with the mailing of matter for the blind.

Summary of Discussion Following Mr. Sheridan's Paper

Consideration was given to the possibility of arranging a pick-up service by the post offices for the return of records. Such arrangements might be most effectively worked out with the local postmasters. Such a service is frequently provided by post offices, but it is a voluntary arrangement within the discretion of the postmaster, and there is no legal provision for such service. An effort to develop a pick-up system employing volunteer aid had not proved feasible, and inability to secure one was discouraging reading by a possible 20 percent.

Some sentiment was expressed that local arrangements with postmasters subject to frequent changes in office, would not provide a long-term solution. Possibly the appropriate course would be to seek remedial legislation. Experience indicated that the Post Office Department needed authorization from Congress.

However, on the matter of careless handling by postal employees, the local postmaster did seem the logical person from whom to seek remedy. The exact amount of inefficiency would be difficult to ascertain.

Another problem—how to facilitate chain mailing of periodical literature without returning each separate loan transaction to the post office was met with the suggestion that labels for the several borrowers involved would permit direct remailing. Each borrower would be operating as the agent of the lending library.

Distribution of Talking Book Machines

M. ROBERT BARNETT, *Executive Director*
American Foundation for the Blind, Inc.

So far in this program, each person has had some qualifications in the particular field that was being reported to you at the moment, and now that we come to myself, there is a sudden, abrupt departure. I am not directly or administratively concerned with the distribution of Talking Book machines and their repair. Actually, I am only speaking for those agencies and/or institutions that have the problem of distributing the machines. I might also add that the paper is not prepared and I am simply going to give you a few brief notes.

My topic is on the distribution of Talking Book machines; and secondly, their repair. Therefore, I will try to avoid the temptation of discussing anything else about these machines—their quality or lack of it, etc. When I first began this report, I thought, “Why should I do any work?” A few conversations with the boys down here indicated that the information about Talking Book machines already in the States should be available in Washington. However, and in all kindness, the Library tells me that, “We are not very good at reporting to our Federal parent. We like to get our Federal services and Federal money but we do not like to record what we are getting.” Since complete information was not where it was supposed to be, I sent out a questionnaire.

However, I must truthfully say, my own efforts are hardly much better since 11 States are not represented in the statistics that I am about to give you. The statistics then are not conclusive and add only to the confusion of the statistics already available. Our first effort was to establish the answer to the question—“How many blind readers use Talking Book machines?” Information bearing on this subject comes from many sources, but without a final or accurate conclusion. The Library lists a total of 36,000 machines which have been distributed and are supposed to be in circulation. The American Foundation for the Blind prints and mails 30,000 copies of *Talking Book Topics*. The replies to our questionnaire, with 11 States missing, indicates a total of 28,600 machines in use.

The next question we attempted to answer for you is—“Who distributes the machines?” In the 36 States represented in the reports that were received, 40 of the distributors are in the category of agencies like a State division for the blind; 1 is in the category of a workshop; 1 is under a division of vocational

rehabilitation; 3 are libraries; 2 are schools for the blind; 2 more are volunteer groups. The territorial distributors are largely official agencies. Beyond that, what personnel or system distributes these machines? The answer is summarized to show that 37 States report that it is largely home teachers and next would be vocational counselors or case-work personnel. Only 2 of the 37 States report that all machines are delivered without personal attention. Only when the person receiving the machines is a person with some technical ability do they mail them. None pretend that all machines are delivered personally to the blind. There is no uniformity from State to State of delivery of the machines.

We attempted next to discover the proportion of machines in storage and in use with some comparison between States. New York leads with the largest number of machines both in inventory and circulation. Pennsylvania ranges between 2,500 and 3,000 machines. There is a very noticeable drop down to 1,100 machines in Florida, Texas, and New Jersey. Florida with something under 1,100 active machines, has a total inventory of 1,600. New Jersey with about 1,050 active machines, has a total inventory of 1,250. Texas with a total circulation of just below 1,100 has no inventory at all. The national average shows that 20 percent of the machines on inventory are inactive, meaning that they are in inventory awaiting circulation, lost, stolen or needing repair. Twenty-seven of the States feel that the surplus they had on hand would be adequate for any anticipated increase in the next year or so. Eleven of the States said that their supply would be inadequate. Five of the 37 States expressed dissatisfaction with their monthly quotas. The rest seemed happy. That finishes the reading of the statistics, such as they are.

If I had thought that I would get a complaint from the States that would support a notion that there was a tug of war between Regional Libraries and Distributing Agencies or that there was a great dissatisfaction with the flow of machines from Washington, I can say that the 37 States who reported do not bear out this suggestion.

Now we come to repair. That was one of the greatest problems that appeared in the replies. The complaints had to do with brand new machines that will not play upon testing, and the problem of receiving a machine from the repair depot in working order. Thirty of the States reporting showed that they used the Federal depot for repairs almost exclusively. The rest sent their machines to a local repairman. Several States showed a rather abrupt receipt of surplus allotments. On testing some of these new machines, there were more than a dozen replies that they do not consistently perform well when taken from the package and tested. One State reports that, curiously, the failure to operate was due to damaged tubes.

I believe that covers my report, and I think I will leave it there in that fashion. I have not brought any too great problems to the Conference. I have not found occasion to bring up the proposal that books and machines be administered by the same agency. The experience in the field does not seem to indicate that that is a problem.

Summary of Discussion Following Mr. Barnett's Paper

Discussion related to reproducers available to fill the demands of State Agencies responsible for their distribution and to the operation of the quota system. There was indication that machines, particularly Model "T" machines, did not, in many instances, perform satisfactorily after repair. There was considerable dissatisfaction with their performance even before being subjected to reader use. The critical need for more stringent acceptance tests was emphasized. Deficiency in the quality of reproducers is so widespread as to seriously discourage reading by the blind.

Difficulty in securing parts and materials has discouraged bidding on the reproducers in recent years, and has placed the manufacturers in a competitive situation requiring cutting of prices on components. As a consequence, a machine that is cheaper in price has evolved. It was suggested that cheaper components and materials will, logically, result in a product that may not achieve as high standards of performance as a more expensive model might. This led to the suggestion that possibly in preparation of specifications it might be desirable to work toward design rather than performance specifications.

Service of Talking Book Records and Books in Braille in the Regional Libraries

MARGARET M. McDONALD, *Librarian*

Harry L. Wolfner Memorial Library for the Blind, St. Louis Public Library

The topics which I would like to submit to this group this afternoon for discussion are as follows: (1) The increase in the use of the Talking Book and the problems involved in this service and the decline in the reading of Braille Books, (2) books for children, (3) surplus stock and shelf space, (4) the recording of textbooks, (5) a uniform code of procedure for all Distributing Libraries, and (6) last but not least, the question of how the Distributing Libraries should be supported.

According to the statement in *Books for the Adult Blind*, which we all received last week, there were 30,691 Talking Book readers and only 9,555 readers of Braille. Now this fact is easily understood, since most of our blind persons lose their sight late in life, and the process of learning to read Braille is much too trying for them. In the Wolfner Memorial Library for the Blind of St. Louis, with which I am associated, in 1950 we issued 28,627 Talking Books, but only 8,144 Braille. These figures do not sound very large, it is true, but the work involved in the handling and care of the Talking Books taxes the actual physical strength of the staff to the limit. It would greatly ease this situation if all of the books would be of the size and weight of the new recorded edition of the Bible, which we have recently received. Another detail in the handling of these books is the replacement of broken and missing records. Recently we have adopted the following method: When a record is missing, and we are unable to have it returned to us, we withdraw the book from the shelf list and file the remaining records under author and title, and keep these to use in replacing missing records at a future date. This is proving fairly satisfactory to us, but may not meet with approval within this group.

With the ever increasing supply of Talking Book titles there is the terrific problem of shelf space. Right now we are in the process of shifting books and the task is not only back breaking but the thought constantly occurs "just how long will it be until we have to do this again". How many copies should a library keep on their shelves after a title has passed its peak of popularity? And if the books are in fair condition, what can we do but keep them? These are some of the questions which I hope will be answered in this meeting.

According to the statistics from most libraries the reading of Braille has declined. I wonder if this is actually true, or is it that it appears true, because

of the tremendous increase in the use of the Talking Books. There is one thing certain and that is that it will be true if as libraries we are unable to offer to the children in our schools Braille books which will appeal to them.

I realize that in bringing up this subject I may be calling attention to something over which the Division for the Blind has no jurisdiction, but it is something about which I feel very strongly, and if this condition is to be remedied, it must be done on a national basis, and it is something which only the Library of Congress, Division for the Blind could, if given the funds, work out successfully.

My understanding is that there are now 17 schools for the blind which teach grade two Braille only. This is the case in Missouri, and consequently our collection of children's titles is pitiful. Every large library and libraries of small communities has a children's room. Much thought and consideration goes into the selection of titles suitable for the children of the area served. Since this is the universal practice in regular libraries for sighted children it is difficult to understand why this phase of library work is overlooked insofar as blind children are concerned. It is possible that children's books should be housed in the various State schools, but if this condition existed the children in many cases would not be able to get the books during the summer vacation period, and this is the time when they have ample opportunity to read. The fact is that blind children are not getting books suitable for their needs. This is proved beyond doubt when we see how few of them remain on our borrowers' lists after they finish school. We are definitely not going to have good adult Braille readers in any great numbers unless we are able to develop a love of good literature in the school children of today. If the Division for the Blind of the Library of Congress ever takes on this phase of our work, employing a good children's librarian to select the titles to be transcribed into Braille, it is my firm belief that our children's work would greatly increase, and that in the future our adult Braille readers would be increased as the children develop the reading habit.

It was my intention to bring up the question of how to supply textbooks for students, but as this is on the program for tomorrow, I will not discuss it here, only to state that I certainly believe the National Committee for Recording for the Blind will fill a definite need, and to wish them every success.

Now I come to my fifth topic, which is a uniform code of procedure for the Distributing Libraries. From my contacts with several other libraries it has been self evident that few of us do things in just the same way. Maybe it is not essential that all procedures are the same, but it would be a help if we had some kind of a manual to which we could refer if and when we were in doubt as to what course to follow. For example: How many libraries charge fines? We do not, and as a result, it is very difficult to get our books returned in many instances. Some libraries require specific requests before books are sent to a borrower. We request, but do not require a list. These and many other details of the work are not uniform, and it would help a lot if we had a manual to

which we could refer when there is some doubt about what we should do under certain circumstances.

Last, but not least on my list of topics is the question of the support of the Regional Libraries. Some of our libraries are under State Agencies, but many are part of city library systems and as such are supported solely by the communities in which they are located, although they give service to the entire State and in many instances to adjoining States. In this day of constantly increasing costs this situation is obviously unfair to the taxpayers of the cities in which the Distributing Library is located. It would be interesting to know how many of our Distributing Libraries are subsidized by the areas they serve. And also how were they able to get this financial help.

This brings to a close the topics I thought might interest you this afternoon. I want to express my gratitude to Mr. Patterson for giving me this opportunity to appear before you. I hope that some good will come from the discussion, not only for ourselves but also for the many blind persons whom we serve.

Summary of Discussion Following Miss McDonald's Paper

Discussion centered around the growing demand for children's books for the blind, and how best to satisfy the demand. It was pointed out that under the Pratt-Smoot Act the program was limited to books for the adult blind, which appears to preclude the expenditure of Federal funds for juvenile literature. Under the American Printing House program, in addition to the basic textbook material, 100 fiction books were brought out last year.

In the schools, Braille is still the principal medium used rather than books in recorded form, in the proportions of 69.5 percent Braille, 11 percent sight saving, and 19.5 percent Talking Book. The desirability of more publicity on our library service for the blind and of more effort being made to acquaint Congress with the needs in the program was implicit. The question of funds to support the operations in the field was raised. This is currently recognized as a State or local responsibility since Federal funds are restricted to the procurement of books and their distribution to the Regional Libraries.

Expansion of the Program of Books for the Adult Blind in Terms of Maximum Reader Potential

ROMAINE P. MACKIE, *Specialist*

Schools for Physically Handicapped, Office of Education,
Federal Security Agency

A great service is being rendered to the blind by the libraries of this country. Through the Library of Congress and the 28 Regional Libraries across the country, the service to the Nation is continuing to expand. Most of the work, however, has grown without definite knowledge of the needs of blind readers. It is, consequently, evident that the problem is larger than it was previously thought to be and facilities are far from adequate. In order to determine the maximum potential reader load among blind adults, such questions as the following must be answered: Who are the potential adult readers among the blind? How do they read? What do they read?

Potential Adult Readers Among the Blind

It is estimated that there are approximately 250,000 blind people in the United States. Only about 10 percent of this number, according to most recent statistics, are under age 20 and as many as 50 percent are said to be over 65. The fact that blindness occurs most frequently in the older age group is, of course, significant in planning reading materials for the blind. On the one hand, most of the approximately 10 percent who become blind before they are 20 have been educated as blind children and are thus potential adult Braille readers. On the other hand, the 90 percent who have grown up as sighted people and have not had Braille reading in school may never become Braille readers.

Potential Readers Among Those Blind from Childhood

For many years the Office of Education, Federal Security Agency, has collected statistics, supplied information, and given consultative service on the education of blind children. This service is rendered by the Section on Exceptional Children and Youth which is concerned with those children who require some special help from the schools if they are to take advantage of the opportunity for an education. The term "exceptional children" includes those who

are physically handicapped by impaired vision, impaired hearing, crippling conditions, speech defects, and special health problems; mentally retarded; mentally gifted; and seriously socially handicapped or emotionally disturbed.

According to data collected by the Office of Education, the total number of blind children in both day and residential schools in the United States is now approximately 6,000. For more than 100 years effort has been made in the United States to educate blind children. Until recently most blind children were educated in residential schools. Enrollments in residential schools for the blind increased steadily from 1910 to 1940. In 1947 the statistics showed a slight change in trend with a decline in the number of blind children enrolled in residential schools. The number, however, is still considerably above 5,000.

During this century some public school systems have instituted classes for blind children in day schools. These are to be found in large population centers where the number is sufficient to warrant such a program. Reports in 1947 indicated that there were in the United States between five and six hundred blind children in special public day school classes. These children, like those in residential schools, are being educated to read Braille and will be accustomed to the use of the Talking Books. If it can be assumed that these boys and girls will live to an average age of 65, they alone will comprise a group of nearly 20,000 potential library users.

Potential Blind Adult Readers

The reader group of blind adults will be composed of the possible 20,000 who have been without sight since childhood plus an undetermined number who will read either through Braille or by use of the Talking Book. It has been estimated that the total number of potential blind readers is about 70,000. If this number is a good estimate, it means that somewhat less than one-third of the total blind population are potential library users.

HOW DO THEY READ

The development of the Braille system of reading is a story in itself and does not need to be repeated here. For hundreds of years man labored to find suitable media through which the blind might have opened to them opportunities to read. Even Braille reading, which represents great advance, is comparatively slow and the amount of material available in Braille type is still relatively limited. To supplement reading opportunities possible through Braille materials, the Talking Book has come into use. The advent of the Talking Book and the service making it available, seem to be making some dramatic changes in the reading habits of the blind. For a time after the Talking Book became available the number of requests to libraries for Braille books and Talking Books was approximately the same. There has been a shift since 1940, however, which indicates a much greater demand for Talking Books than for

Braille publications. Statistics given in the *Annual Report of the Librarian of Congress* for the fiscal year ending June 30, 1950 are as follows:

	1940	1945	1950
Talking Book readers	14,220	17,356	25,643
Braille readers	14,825	12,782	9,513
Total	<u>29,045</u>	<u>30,138</u>	<u>35,156</u>

This trend has significance and should be carefully watched in planning to meet the demands of the blind readers.

WHAT THE BLIND PERSON READS

Divisions for the blind in various libraries in the country report that the reading tastes of the blind are as varied as those of the general population. These reading tastes, however, are not exactly parallel to those of sighted library users. Examination of letters coming to a large library division for the blind for a period of one month included requests for Braille books and Talking Book records on such general topics as psychology, philosophy, social welfare, history, religion, biography, sociology, and music. In the same month requests also came for such highly specialized reading material as a treatise on hypnotism, a history of the rosary, information on radio electronics, a book of sermons, a list of children's books, and a textbook in elementary statistics. Although the adult blind reader potential probably includes only about 70,000 persons, the interests differ so widely as to make it difficult to satisfy demands. The fact that a comparatively small number of people have such a wide array of reading interests in itself presents a problem. How are these varied needs to be met since the production of both Braille and Talking Books is time consuming and expensive? To add to the problem, requests for reading materials do not distribute themselves in quite the usual way. The majority of the potential readers is in the older age bracket. According to available data, older people in the general populations read more from the fields of history, religion, biography, and philosophy rather than, for example, from the field of fiction. This fact in itself is a clue to the kinds of books which should be available in large numbers since more than 50 percent of the blind are in the age group over 65. If half the blind people are likely to want many books on religion, history, philosophy, biography, this need can be anticipated.

There are other factors which give a clue to reader interests among the blind. One is that blind individuals, like many other persons with handicaps, often seek through books an understanding of their own problem. They seek information which will help them overcome their limitations. In so doing, they look especially for publications on psychology, philosophy, and guidance. They may also turn to biographies about successful people who have handicaps.

Still another factor which has bearing on the adult reader demand is that of special groups. The blind students of high school and college age represent such a group. These blind students are competing with others who read widely.

They need texts and supplemental books both in Braille and in Talking Books. Their success, even though they are assisted by "readers," depends upon getting these reading materials. Students are calling for Braille and Talking Books on various phases of history and social studies, technical and scientific matters, texts and classics in foreign languages, and other specialized materials. The blind student needs every possible tool at his disposal. Means should be found to provide the Talking Books and the Braille publications he requires. Still another factor has significance in providing the stock for the divisions of the blind in libraries. Blind people, just as sighted people, have specialized needs in connection with their vocations, and they will seek books related to their interest. One person, for instance, wants material on domestic science, one on radio, one on poultry raising, another on something very technical in the world of music. And so it goes!

Many of these demands for materials in Braille on highly specific or rare topics will be supplied by individually Brailled materials. Since this is true, every possible way should be found for circulating and making such material available to more than one person even though these persons are being served by different libraries in different parts of the country.

Summary

As increased attempts are being made to meet the reading needs of adult blind persons, many problems will undoubtedly be overcome. It is hoped that in the near future, ways can be found to:

1. Render more service to blind adolescents and youths, especially to students and to those who are talented.
2. List and make available on as wide basis as possible materials being prepared in single copies to meet individual interests.
3. Make research studies in connection with the problem and determine more accurately the potential reader load. While doing so, the age distribution of blind readers must be kept in mind.
4. Examine reasons why the number of blind persons who are not library users is so large to see if more could not be influenced to read, or at least to use, Talking Books.

Summary of Discussion Following Dr. Mackie's Paper

The question was raised as to the potential expansion of the program in terms of readers to be served. Admittedly, reliable statistics were lacking. Conjecture ranged from 70,000 to 130,000 within a framework of approximately 300,000 blind persons in the country.

During the first 20 years of the program the number of readers was restricted to the number of machines available for distribution and the total number of readers reached could not be expected to exceed available machines. There are now about 40,000 machines not counting many that have been scrapped. The

unreliability of attempting an estimate of readers in terms of Talking Book apart from Braille readers was pointed out, because a large proportion of readers fall within both categories.

Reference was made to the importance of convenience in reading as a stimulus to reading. The comment was made that although material in Braille should continue to be placed in the readers' hands, Talking Books should also be made available as a more practicable and facile instrument for opening up the whole field of literature. Although adult books should be made available to high-school children sufficiently mature, the American Printing House program was deemed the more appropriate medium for providing reading material for blind children.

The conclusion was drawn that we need more information as a basis for action, that more service is needed for the adolescent group, more research in age interests, and more attention to meeting highly individualized needs.

Requirements of Space, Equipment, and Personnel in Terms of Existing Service and Future Expansion

CHARLES GALLOZZI, *Head,*
Books for the Blind The Free Library of Philadelphia

Our librarian at the Free Library of Philadelphia, Mr. Franklin H. Price, after more than 50 years of service and a real interest in the blind, retired last Thursday, November 15. His successor, Mr. Emerson Greenaway, has already indicated his interest in our work and our problems. Naturally, with a change in administration, our department will of necessity review its policies and procedures in the very process of explaining its activities to a new librarian. A critical review is being made therefore, of our procedures and other phases of our services, so that we will remain sensitive to the actual needs of the blind today.

With the preceding in mind, and also as preparation for this Conference, I wrote to a number of Distributing Libraries asking for comments and suggestions in connection with space, equipment and personnel. Several of the answers were so clearly and dramatically significant, I have made liberal use of their comments to which I shall refer, anonymously, later in this paper.

The number of personnel required to staff any library is directly related to the scope of the services offered. Available equipment and physical conveniences and inconveniences will affect the number of persons required to do a given job. Perhaps some basic formula can be suggested by surveying staff, then, by applying the differentials peculiar to any particular library, we may arrive at a possible standard.

I shall outline briefly the situation as it now stands at Philadelphia. While we are functioning smoothly, the pressure of work is such that I definitely consider the department understaffed for existing conditions. We have a staff of 11, 4 of whom, all men, are on the mechanical force; 6 are young women, classed as clerical assistants. The head of the department is the only one required to have professional training.

This staff of 11 is responsible for the basic routines common to all Distributing Libraries. The department is located in the main building and is open from 9 in the morning until 10 at night. From October through May we are open every Sunday from 2 in the afternoon until 10 at night. The largest circulation of books for the blind in the country is handled by our library. This circulation

averages approximately 10,000 items per month. We maintain a system which never leaves a reader without reading matter at any time except at his own request, whether or not he submits lists. The task of selecting titles for more than 2,500 readers in such a way as to avoid duplicating anything which may already have been read, even years earlier, is a detailed one. Every year a catalog of new Talking Book titles is prepared by this department, printed, and distributed to every reader with the request that it be marked for preferences, and returned to the library.

We in Philadelphia are associated daily with the Quakers and as you all know, they have a "concern" about one thing or another. One of our real "concerns" is that of providing reading materials for those who are not blind, but whose vision is not sufficient to read from our regular collections. We should do more work than at present with sightsaving groups and also with children, indeed a growing and serious problem.

All books are processed by and within the department, and we maintain a card catalog of the entire collection. This catalog is maintained in Braille form as well as in ink-print. Our cataloging is simplified as much as possible and is adapted from Library of Congress catalog cards. We make author, title and subject entries, and added entries as needed. In preparing new accessions for circulation we find it necessary to re-mark the Talking Book containers as the present location of the numbers is inconvenient during our discharging process.

In addition to the standard equipment found in any department for the blind, our special equipment consists of an Addressograph, and some flat hand trucks each having a capacity of from 100 to 150 Talking Book containers.

Available shelf space comprises approximately 6,000 lineal feet of deep steel shelving, on 3 different levels, with access to a book lift and elevators. Most of the shelves are tightly filled and there is usually an overflow of hundreds of volumes and containers. About 3,000 embossed volumes awaiting legal disposition, are in an additional storeroom on still another level.

Within the limitations imposed by the services we render, I believe that the efficiency of the staff and of our procedures is relatively high. Since none of the staff are part time, and the only blind member has been with the department for more than 20 years, the calibre of the group may be a bit higher than the average, but I believe it can well be used as a basis for establishing requirements for a Distributing Library. Again it must be emphasized that the particular conditions under which any library operates have a significant effect on the number of personnel required.

But I should not be like the proverbial ostrich and consider only what is done at the Free Library of Philadelphia. Let us examine what some of my colleagues were generous enough to contribute to this paper. I quote:

"The personnel problem is always difficult because the work of handling books for blind readers requires a comparatively large staff. To meet our needs we would need about 8 or 9 members but we are doing the best we can with about 6. It is our opinion that at least 2

members of the staff should be of a professional grade and the other members of the clerical grade. The clerical staff, if well trained and properly compensated, should help to keep down the number of professional staff members."

From another source:

"By standards based upon library service to sighted persons, a staff of 6 is judged to be ample for our 1,500 borrowers, adult and juvenile. However, it requires the utmost expenditure of effort to keep the required records and circulate about 50,000 volumes a year, besides doing the necessary reference work and correspondence incident to a scattered clientele."

From still another source:

"We are not so fortunate in the personnel assigned to our department. We do not have the help needed as to the number of workers, and our staff is constantly shifting due to the employment of persons on a temporary basis. We do not have the professional help we should have."

It is to be regretted that some of the libraries in this country seem to consider their departments for the blind as stepchildren. None of us can justifiably demand preference over departments which serve a much larger percentage of the public, but open discrimination is particularly harmful when expressed in terms of personnel and salaries, as some have indicated.

While it is apparent that most of the problems mentioned must be handled within the local libraries, yet the Library of Congress might be requested to suggest minimum standards for the number and quality of personnel. On the other hand, since practically all the Distributing Libraries serve territories far beyond their own source of revenue, the claim that at least a proportionate share of the pay roll be borne by the Federal Government is a legitimate one. Might it not be a good idea to review the entire problem of local, State and Federal financing of our work?

The logical thing to do in any case is to attempt to eliminate waste of personnel time as far as possible. Many suggestions have been offered toward this end, most of them requiring no radical change of law or procedure. The Library of Congress, for example, has raised the morale of those of us in the hinterlands by holding this Conference. It is my hope that increased efficiency of service will result. Some problems need immediate attention. Requests for a supply of needles, when not filled promptly, cause an extravagant waste of time and energy. Requests for replacements of records, titles or volumes, when definitely refused, require adjustments to be made which take an increasing amount of staff time, but when ignored, add confusion to the situation as well. There are always a few titles which gain tremendous popularity. Requests for additional copies, if filled immediately, would effect great savings of time and work. But if the additional copies do not arrive until the popularity has worn off, then they simply create an additional storage problem.

One of my fellow librarians states:

"There are several mechanical improvements that can be made in the records and containers. Recent records are inaccurately sized so they catch against the metal guide posts at the back of the Talking Book machines. The titles of British made Talking Books are frequently lost before they reach us through the mail. A little waterproof cement used before shipping would save us the work of making new titles. The same waterproof cement used as a thin coating on strap ends keeps them from fraying when the metal tips have been pulled off. Couldn't some such material be used in the manufacture of the straps and the metal tips discontinued?

"We find the fact that the books placed here by the Library of Congress are all on an adult level a handicap. All of the blind children of the area spend their summers at home, away from any school libraries. And there is a growing tendency to encourage blind children to attend regular schools. All of this means that we have many requests for children's books and very little material that is suitable. Among the blind adults, we have a number who are mentally retarded and their need for reading material, particularly in recorded form, is largely unsatisfied.

"While each library will always handle its circulation in a manner that fits in with its own system, a survey of service practices might bring about a little more similarity . . . Every time I've been able to learn something about the way other libraries handle things, I've found some points that were helpful in simplifying or improving our system."

Another librarian says briefly:

"We believe that a manual of procedures of best practices in departments for the blind throughout the country would be of considerable assistance, particularly in training new members of the staff.

"We further suggest that all titles be provided with a full set of catalog cards. Centralized cataloging with the obvious saving of mechanical duplication of cards, is desirable and feasible."

Dependent as we all are on the magnificent service of the Post Office, I hesitate to bring up the time honored complaint of returning Talking Books. But one librarian worded it so graciously that I will repeat it here:

"Our only problem, and it is not very serious, is the difficulty which our readers occasionally have with the Post Office over picking up the books to be returned when the new ones are delivered. Most of the drivers are very kind on this point, but infrequently some one will be told that they are not supposed to 'pick up'. If the borrower lives alone and at a distance from a post office, returning books becomes quite a hardship and a bit of a problem for us."

The requirements of space for all libraries should be practically identical for basic collections. Additional space is necessary for books added which are not furnished by the Federal government. While some libraries may receive more copies of titles, it can be assumed that the larger circulation of those with the extra copies will keep the number of volumes and containers actually to be shelved almost on a par with the rest. An acute shortage of space is almost universal, and to face any possible expansion, immediate steps will have to be taken. I will again throw the burden of expressing the situation on the shoulders of others by quoting:

"At present the housing of the collection leaves much to be desired, though the administration, from time to time, has made additional shelving available in a building where all divisions are clamoring for space. The additional footage amounts to about 3 times that utilized in 1931, but it is in 3 different rooms 2 of which are at a distance from the working center, and on different levels, necessitating the use of stairs and ramps. One room where a large amount of Braille is shelved, is a combined workshop and supply-storage, with the result that a great amount of dirt is slowly coating every volume, much of it sifting inside the books. In 2 of the rooms the shelving is built to a height of 10 feet, requiring that the staff haul (or carry) a stepladder from stack to stack to select or shelve books. At present the shelves are so closely packed that the embossing is becoming damaged."

Here is another presentation of the problem:

"With the development and expansion of the Talking Book project, libraries for the blind have become involved in definite warehousing problems. We therefore need warehouse space, and warehouse equipment to do our work properly. It is no longer possible to use the ordinary public library facilities for library work with the blind. We need special premises to support the great physical weight of the records and special equipment to move this great weight from place to place, to say nothing of proper loading facilities."

We are offered more suggestions by still another librarian:

"The increased volume of embossed materials is taxing seriously our space allocation. And whereas the availability of numerous titles for blind readers is splendid, it creates a problem in processing and shelving.

"We have also found that a considerable portion of the titles are infrequently used, even with vigorous promotion. This leads us to repeat our suggestion of regional deposit centers where little used material might be housed and made available on inter-library loans. Perhaps our patrons are not typical, but they do not use many of the scholarly titles which have been forwarded to us under the program. The occasional user of such material would not mind a slight delay

in filling his request from a deposit center. We think that books in Moon type might be serviced from a central collection.

"We also recommend that a simple, clear-cut policy be established for retiring unneeded and worn-out material."

I wish to point out here that the quotations given above do not indicate isolated cases. In most instances I selected one out of several similar ones, and they can be considered typical.

We are all appreciative of the many benefits of the Federal program of books for the blind. We all recognize that at no other time has the overall operation been as smooth and efficient as it is now. But since we have been gathered here to offer constructive criticism, I have tried to present what we at the Free Library of Philadelphia feel to be subject to improvement. At the same time I have availed myself of the opportunity to express some of the thoughts of a few of my colleagues in this important enterprise. May I therefore offer these concrete suggestions for consideration and action:

1. An immediate survey of practices among the Distributing Libraries, and the preparation of a manual of suggested procedures.
2. An effective policy for removing obsolescent or inactive material from the shelves of distributing libraries.
3. The establishment of a central depository for little used titles.
4. A definite policy in connection with supplies and the replacement of books in whole or in part.
5. Arrangements whereby additional copies of very popular titles can be obtained on short notice.
6. Central cataloging of books for the blind, with a full set of printed cards to accompany each title.
7. A study of the physical aspects of Talking Book containers.
8. Re-interpretation of the program and the law so as to include both the near blind and blind children.
9. Suggested standards for personnel requirements.
10. Better arrangements with the postal authorities for the return of talking books.
11. A study of the financial aspects of the program so as to alleviate the burden now carried by the distributing libraries.

Summary of Discussion Following Mr. Gallozzi's Paper

Discussion raised the question of policy relating to disposition by Regional Libraries of reading material considered surplus to their needs. It was pointed out that determining what material was surplus was necessarily made by the Regional Libraries. It would then be incumbent upon the Division for the Blind to decide whether such materials could be used to advantage by other libraries within the system or disposed of as waste in conformity with established

procedures involving invitations to bidders. The need for wider information about these procedures was indicated.

Discussion was continued on the feasibility of establishing a central depository for lesser used materials, and the value of an operational manual to clarify these and other procedures. Availability to users of the National Student Collection and a centrally organized cataloging system were mentioned.

Hand Transcribing of Books into Braille by Volunteers

MAYBELLE K. (MRS. WALTER) PRICE, *President*

Volunteers Service for the Blind, Inc.

In 1921, fostered and administered by the Southeastern Pennsylvania Chapter of the American Red Cross, a group of Braille Volunteers was organized to fulfill, insofar as possible, the educational and cultural needs of men blinded in the World War I. At that time, Braille was little known and little used in this country and blind reading material was limited almost entirely to the use of the Moon and other embossed type letters.

Because the use of Braille opened a way, not only to produce far less cumbersome books, but also to permit blind persons a method whereby they could write letters to each other, make notes and memoranda for their own use, and to become more independent generally in the matter of reading and writing, the improvement gained by using Braille instead of earlier forms was very apparent and its adaptation to the application in individual school and business needs provided a great challenge to this group of volunteer workers.

In our early development stages, we were greatly spurred on by the incentive furnished by Lt. Frank Schoble, one of the two blinded officers of World War I, who helped to stimulate and direct the thinking of our group into channels where the results of our work would be most effective.

In 1942, the Braille Department separated from the American Red Cross, to become the Volunteers Service for the Blind, Inc., an independent agency. The need for this change was recognized for speeding the growth, both nationally and internationally, of the application of the work of the Volunteers, which 20 years of service had brought to the attention of every English speaking nation in the world.

Since our organization specializes in the individual requirements of blind students and businessmen and women, one of our primary requirements is to build an organization of trained transcribers to prepare these specialized books, pamphlets, papers, and other Brailled materials.

To become qualified in any phase of Braille transcribing, a volunteer must take a prescribed course of study, using the manual of Standard English Braille now in use by the Division for the Blind of the Library of Congress. Upon satisfactory completion of the 14 lessons, a trial manuscript of 50 pages is transcribed by the student volunteer and submitted to the Library of Congress

for approval. If the manuscript shows the volunteer has met the requirements and standards established by the Library, a transcriber's certificate is issued by the Librarian of Congress to the volunteer. A follow-up course is then given by our organization, which consists of a 6-month apprenticeship during which period our volunteer teachers work with the new transcriber, emphasizing accuracy, neatness, uniformity of dots, and avoidance of erasures. All completed manuscripts are then carefully read and checked by our local proofreader and graded accordingly. This grading system has proved to be most valuable in developing specialized transcribers who accept major assignments in specific fields.

As an illustration of these specialized requirements, we point to the need of the blind musicians, the notes of whose music must be transcribed into Braille for their study. In still other instances, we have engineering students and graduates who require books of logarithms and calculus for constant reference—a reference which can be utilized only by their personal study and application of these mathematical tables.

To fulfill the ever increasing requirements of blind students attending colleges and universities—not only in this country but, as mentioned earlier, in many foreign countries—we stand ready to provide any textbook that is needed. For example, in addition to the mathematics and music already mentioned, our volunteers have transcribed Russian, German, Greek, French, Latin, Amharic (the official language of Ethiopia), trigonometry, symbolic logic, statistical analysis, medical terminology, psychometric tests, and many many others.

I would like to stress here the fact that while there are many books on varying subjects which are widely used and recognized by colleges throughout the land, yet there are many courses of study which are based on special books for which we may get only 1, or 2, or 3 requests over a period of years and, like a book on logarithms, they are such that a student must be able to review personally. He cannot grasp them by having them read to him nor can he utilize them sufficiently well by having them transcribed onto records. For this reason, the continuation of hand-transcribed Braille is a vital necessity if we are to provide an adequate, well-rounded service to our blinded soldiers and citizens.

Many people ask us where we secure the volunteers to do this exacting and rather tedious work. Of course, volunteers come to our headquarters and take our regular course of lessons. When one's temperament is suited to Braille transcribing it has a fascination beyond any other work one can do. As a result, we have Braille transcribing volunteers who have been hand-transcribing for 20 and even 30 years. However, we believe we have a rather unique method of getting good, steady volunteer transcribers who have lots of time on their hands.

In July 1945, we organized Braille classes in the Eastern State Penitentiary of Pennsylvania and in the New Jersey State Reformatory. Most of these transcribers have not gone beyond the 8th grade level in school, but after intensive training they are able to produce satisfactory work and many of these people find that Braille transcribing not only gives them a sense of contributing

to the world outside, or of righting a wrong, or of filling in otherwise idle time, but it also greatly advances and improves their own education. Our agency has also organized a group in the Home for the Incurables, and they do outstanding work. In all of these classes, we provide the materials needed and furnish instructors to meet with the group once each week.

A moment ago I mentioned the transcription of music into Braille. We are one of the few organizations in this Country doing this work. Requests for music are coming to us from many parts of our own country and from a number of foreign countries. We have done orchestral scores, books on counterpoint, harmony, and many other forms of music. Transcribing music into Braille is a very difficult task and few volunteers care to undertake it. However, there is perhaps no other type of hand-transcribed Braille which can provide greater satisfaction and happiness than listening to an artist giving a well-received performance of a difficult score which you, the transcriber, has made possible.

Today, by far the greatest number of blind persons in progressive countries are educated, self-supporting citizens. No longer are the blind the "misty figure in the chimney corner," to quote many 18th and 19th century authors. For this change, much of the credit is due to the blind themselves—to their eagerness to learn and to their untiring devotion to mastering the tasks before them—simple tasks which come to us naturally, such as eating, brushing our hair, holding our heads up when we walk, looking at the person to whom we speak. However, much credit must also be given to the hundreds of volunteers who have dedicated their lives to aiding the blind in achieving this precious independence.

As in all work which is designed to fill the individual needs of a large group of people, provision must be made to provide great variety in small quantities. I am thinking of the brush salesman in Camden, N. J., for whom the entire Camden telephone directory was transcribed in loose-leaf form, giving the name, the telephone number and the address of his prospective customers. I think of the sociology professor at one of our large universities who must have special texts from the works of many recognized sociology masters in order to adequately refer his students to them. I think of the insurance agents who must have rate tables if they are to sell the insurance by which they earn their living. I think of the company telephone directories necessary to the blind personnel counselors, and of the special medical references which must be available to blind doctors. These are items of constant and repetitious reference—and page 102 must be just as convenient to its user as is the opening paragraph on page 1. For this reason, these things do not lend themselves to machine transcribing or to a single reading by a sighted companion.

In our belief, and as proven by our experience over the past 30 years, hand-transcribing will remain a vital necessity so long as Braille is transcribed; so long as it is used and read by blind persons; and so long as we are faced with the challenge of fulfilling their individual requirements in attaining and maintaining their independent status as useful and productive citizens.

Program of the National Committee for Recording for the Blind, Inc.

ANNE (MRS. RANALD H. JR.) MACDONALD, *President*
National Committee for Recording for the Blind, Inc.

The National Committee for Recording for the Blind welcomed Mr. Patterson's invitation to speak at this Conference and to present an up-to-date report on its work. Before doing so, however, I should like to say a word about what has most impressed me in the discussions we have heard to date. It is the enormous extent of the field in which we work and its ever expanding horizons. This extent brings to my mind two salient points. One, the great need for increased uniformity of information and methods on the part of all concerned from the Library of Congress straight down. And the vital essential of a closer integration and participation of the blind themselves in the furtherance of these programs.

The National Committee was incorporated under the Membership Corporations Law of the State of New York on May 16, 1951, in conformance with the requirements of a grant from the Fund for Adult Education of the Ford Foundation. Plus the usual officers, Executive Committee, Board of Directors and an expanding Advisory Committee, the National Committee is most fortunate in that Mr. Patterson and Mr. Barnett have consented to be Advisors to the Organization.

The National Headquarters are at 36 West Forty-fourth Street, New York City under the full time direction of a salaried executive secretary.

At this headquarters is a growing Consolidated File of Textbooks and other requested volumes recorded by all units of the National Committee as well as those recorded by the Model unit operating for the past 2 years at the Yorkville Branch of the New York Public Library. The information in this file is available to all other Recording Centers, and any centers wishing to have their lists registered in the Central Consolidated File may do so by sending their catalog cards. Also copyright clearance is made by the headquarters office.

Copies of the National Committee's Manual of Standards have been sent to other centers at their request and are available to any Recording Center on request. Under the stipulations of the Ford Foundation Grant, the National Committee is obligated and committed to its purpose of establishing a network of Recording Units throughout the country. To date units have been established in the following cities: Chicago, Los Angeles, New York, of course.

Others are in various stages of organization in Denver, St. Louis and Louisville and contacts have been made in Cincinnati. The Chairmen of these units have been carefully selected and are fully qualified.

For the guidance of new units a set of Blue Prints, Instructions, The Manual of Standards, sample procedure used in starting books and photographs of the Model Unit in New York is sent them, together with a sample voice test recording. The National Committee provides each new unit with one recording machine, 1,000 discs, filer and outside envelopes and franking labels to mail recordings to the students. The machines used at present are the newly simplified and compact machines especially designed for this purpose by the Sound-Scriber Corp., New Haven, Conn.

As soon as a book is completed by one of the units, notification is sent to the headquarters office for the files. When a student finishes using the recordings they are returned to Headquarters where a duplicate is made. Should a book be in great demand several copies are made at Headquarters for distribution, the master copy being kept in the Headquarters office and the original recording returned to the locality where it was made, for further circulation.

In line with the above services and procedures, a study is being made of a uniform method of Brailleing of discs, the explanation attached to the filer envelope along with the table of contents accompanying each book. Conferences are being held with technical advisors concerning the use of Tape Recorders in addition to disc recording. The advantages of tape, as you know, are:

1. Tape can be cut and spliced in the event of errors.
2. Clearer copies can be made from tape and reproduction can be made on discs.

The American Foundation for the Blind has offered the use of 10 machines for this purpose. Also the SoundScriber branch in New York will do duplicating for the National Committee.

The chief disadvantage of tape, if it can be called a disadvantage, is its cost arising from the greater expense of the required soundproof booth. However, the National Committee is building a tape recording booth at the Yorkville unit which will be in operation soon.

While the grant from the Fund for Adult Education of the Ford Foundation is a most generous one, the Committee has to plan carefully the use of the money in order best to benefit the increasing number of blind who are able to avail themselves of its services. Overhead has been kept down to the minimum. Except for the small headquarters office in New York and the expense of the executive secretary and her secretary, nothing is paid out for salaries or rent in any part of the country. In establishing new units Committee members have traveled on their own time and at their own expense.

Local libraries have been most hospitable in offering space to new units and in making available their facilities for the local circulation of recorded books. The personnel carrying out this work is a volunteer one. It is interesting to note that this volunteer personnel is a highly diversified one covering, as it must, so

many fields of study and subject matter: science, mathematics, languages, literature, art, etc. The National Committee has been fortunate in obtaining specialists who can record in these fields. While there is much to be said against the "erratic volunteer" there is a great deal more to be said for the volunteer with a mission. Those of us who have had experience know. They fall sick, they go away, but they come back and they do a job.

There is a question often asked of organizations operating with volunteer workers: "What happens to the program during the summer months?" In this case, it may well be asked whether the National Committee is to be swamped, as has happened, around the 1st of September by books the students must have recorded in time to meet their fall schedules. It is the intention of the National Committee to develop a skeleton crew in the several units and it is also the intention of the National Committee to urge students, in so far as they are able, to determine their fall courses before leaving college in May or June.

This is a brief summary of the work and the program of the National Committee for Recording for the Blind. As more and more units are established throughout the country the overwhelming need for recorded books for both adult and undergraduate educational and other more general requirements will be met with greater ease. This is the main purpose of the National Committee and the fundamental reason for the grant given to it. In the words of the grant it is "to aid the organization in its expansion program throughout the United States." In line with this our future policy must be for our own units to record all books for which we receive requests. This is a basic part of the National Committee's expansion program. It simplifies the procedure and the maintenance of uniform standards.³

The Committee looks forward to continuing its valued and pleasant association with other Recording Centers, especially in the field of discussion and the development of new ideas.

On behalf of the National Committee I want to thank Dr. Evans, Mr. Patterson, Dr. Adkinson and Mr. Gunther for their ready help and able advice; Mr. Barnett and Mr. Whittington of the American Foundation for the Blind for their willingness to consult with the Committee at any time and their aid in installing the tape recorder; Miss Johnston, formerly head of the Circulation Department of the New York Public Library and her successor Mr. Corey; Mrs. Skinner, formerly head of the New York Library for the Blind and her successor Mrs. Wilson for so ably handling the distribution of the books recorded at Yorkville; Mrs. Walter Price whom we visited in Philadelphia in September and who has accepted membership on the Advisory Committee.

The National Committee has been fortunate in obtaining on its Board of Directors a nation-wide group of public spirited citizens who take a deep interest in the work, and whose wise counsel is of great and practical help. The backing of this Board, the unselfish and devoted enthusiasm of the many volunteer readers, the manifold evidence of the usefulness of the work, the readiness

³ This policy was never actually put into effect. We are continuing to circulate books to other organizations as in the past.

with which the Committee's plan has been accepted by cities in other States and the sure knowledge of the need for the effort fortifies our determination to make this undertaking a success.

We will proceed carefully and, sometimes, it may seem slowly, trying always to keep in the forefront the quality of the work and the maintenance of uniform standards, always mindful that our first consideration must be the requirements of the blind people whom we are proud and happy to serve.

Special Recording of Educational and Professional Literature by Volunteers

MILDRED C. (Mrs. John L.) SKINNER, *Chairman*
National Committee on Special Recording

The New York Public Library lists 790 titles of specially recorded books. Each one of these books represents many, many volunteer hours of work applied to take care of a specific need of a particular person. The two largest centers of special recording, New York and Philadelphia, together have recorded over 1,100 books. These are textbooks for the most part, some of them extremely difficult and technical. Compare this figure of 1,100 books with the number of Talking Books produced for the Library of Congress over a period of 16 years. This is approximately 1,800 at this time. Then remember that special recording is barely 6 years old, and that most of its accomplishments have been in the last 3 years. Is not this impressive?

Special recording, as I use the term, means the recording of complete books, upon request, on inexpensive plastic discs. As early as 1943, the New Jersey State Commission for the Blind was recording some high school texts on large discs; but it was 1945 and 1946, when the blinded veterans had completed their hospitalization and were going back to college in numbers, that really saw the program take shape. I do not think it necessary to remind this group that these veterans were young men in a hurry, impatient to make up for lost time, and that studying from records suited them much better than Braille. Mrs. Walter Price, Volunteers Service for the Blind, in Philadelphia, and Mrs. Alison Alessios, The New York Public Library, were the pioneers in this field of special recording. Under their guidance, the first volunteers were trained, best methods sought, and some standards set.

One of the first questions often asked about the program is why the SoundScriber was chosen as the machine for recording. It was found the most satisfactory machine for durability, and, because most veterans had been given the SoundScriber Machine by the Veteran's Administration, the discs were usable by them. As the program developed the discs could be used by others on their Government Talking Book machines. Philadelphia serves areas in which some veterans were given Audographs, so they do some recording on this machine also.

The program was started in these 2 places on the college level. It was later extended to help professional men and women. Within the last 2 years or so,

more and more requests have come from high school and elementary school pupils, and more work has been done for these younger groups.

Let me describe to you the program as it developed in New York, but do not lose sight of the fact that similar projects were being carried on in Philadelphia, New Jersey, and later in other States. At the present time, this type of recording is being done in Boston, Cleveland, Washington (University of Seattle), Florida (Rollins College), St. Louis, and it may be in other places.

In New York, then, the program developed slowly through 1947 and 1948. Lack of funds prevented the library buying enough machines to handle requests and we did not dare advertise and attract too much attention. The New York chapter of the American Red Cross, the Society for Ethical Culture, later the Connecticut State Board of Education for the Blind, and still later the New York Guild for the Jewish Blind, worked for the New York Public Library, supplying discs as well as volunteers to do the recording. A number of generous individuals bought their own machines and/or supplied discs. But it was not until the summer of 1949, when the McCanns raised a large sum of money on their morning radio program that the project could advance rapidly. This money bought a number of machines and also went toward building studio recording rooms in a branch of the New York Public Library where a good deal of the work was being done. It was the spring of 1949 that the New York Public Library Women's Council began to sponsor a recording group. This became our largest and most active group.

All books, as I have said, are done upon specific request. But it is worthy of note that the books are asked for over and over again. The discs often have waiting lists, and in some cases we were able to make copies. One of the assets of discs is that they need not be kept together as a whole book. Therefore, volunteers may send out five discs at a time and keep ahead of a student's assignments. Also, arrangements may be made so that more than one student may use the same book during the same term.

Another advantage of the discs is their small size. They are often smaller than the print copy of a book. Compared to bulky Braille or weighty Talking Book records, they are wonderful.

The great advantage to students is that special recording makes available material they need quickly. It means far less dependence on personal reading. Readers often charge as much as \$1 an hour. The discs cost 24 cents an hour, and they may be played over and over for review. A reader may not wish to read at 10 o'clock at night but the discs are there to be used at the convenience of the student. Special recording makes it possible for sightless students to hit more than the high spots, to be on equal terms with sighted boys and girls.

What kind of books have been done? Every kind: chemistry and mathematics as well as French, Spanish, sociology, history, psychology, and literature. Chiropractic students have found the recordings extremely helpful. Law students and practicing attorneys have used the recording service. Another group which find the discs valuable are insurance men. A young woman

doctor recorded *Surgery of the Hand* to the great satisfaction of a doctor in the Oregon State Accident Bureau. There are a number of ham radio operators and several radio books have been done for them. *Consumer Reports* is recorded every month, and articles from *Fortune* and *Electronics* have been recorded.

The possibilities of this special recording are just beginning to be known. One of the advanced students for whom a great deal has been recorded feels strongly that discs should be used with young blind children, and that a blind person will have a much more complete education if he can have the aid of discs at an early age. Certainly, much wider use should be made of discs to help in vocational training. Many blind persons could make more rapid advances in their careers with their aid.

The immediate future of special recording, for the next 3 years, at least, is in the hands of the National Committee for Recording for the Blind, Inc. My name on the program is followed by the words "National Committee on Special Recording." That title is an empty one, and I am sorry it is on the program. My most valuable experience was that of branch librarian of the Library for the Blind in New York. While serving as branch librarian, I helped to organize the National Committee on Special Recording, a committee made up of representatives of the volunteers, representatives of the students and veterans using the recordings, a representative of the American Foundation for the Blind, 2 people having excellent technical knowledge, and 1 person with a wide knowledge of vocational needs of the blind all over the country. My committee drew up a program and planned to seek funds to implement it. We were just on the point of approaching the Ford Foundation for funds when we learned that Ford had made a grant, to do exactly what we had planned, but *not* to our committee. The grant was made to a newly set up group.

The story is long and involved and it no longer matters. The main thing is that there is money now, and that there is the central clearing house that those of us working with special recording wanted long ago. In 1948, I hoped that the Library of Congress might act as a central clearing house for copyrights, for students' requests and to set general standards for the recording. When that did not come to be, I hoped that American Foundation for the Blind might take hold of the program.

Now we have this National Committee for Recording for the Blind. You will hear more about their plans from the next speaker. In closing, there is something I would like to say, and that is it is up to you people to see that the Committee serves the blind adequately. You know the students in your areas. You know their needs. It is up to you to see that the students know of this service. It is up to you to see that the Committee takes care of all requests and meets student deadlines. The Committee should publish printed lists of recorded books available and should keep these lists up-to-date by frequent revisions or supplements. One of my chief concerns is that the Committee operate on a year-round basis. Much of the work for every fall term

must be done during summer months. Student requirements cannot be taken care of if volunteers do not start on fall books until after Labor Day.

I am no longer in a position to put any pressure on the Committee. So I say once more, and I cannot put it too strongly, you people who are working with blind people, do see that your clients get the service to which they are entitled from this \$75,000 Ford grant.

Summary of Discussion Following Papers by Mrs. Price, Mrs. Skinner, and Mrs. MacDonald

There was discussion on the possible extension of the Library of Congress' practice of paying proofreaders of books intended for its collection, to include payment for proofreading books intended for local or regional organizations. The Library, in principle, was sympathetic when it could be demonstrated that a national service of such material was being rendered as well, but would have to acquire some facts and figures to estimate more precisely the extent of such services and their effect upon our program.

There was some opposition to the proposal, based on the assumption that such services were more extensive than generally realized, and consequently there would be a more serious impact upon the Library's expenditures than was anticipated. Parenthetically, there was an inquiry as to whether any study had been made of the total costs involved in the preparation of hand copied books, covering materials, binding, etc., and comparison made of this total with the cost of producing the same title in Braille.

The discussion on the need for an up-to-date and currently maintained catalog of both hand-copied and specially recorded books centered mainly around the requisites for such a catalog, the type of entry, terminal dates of coverage, etc. Preference seemed to be for the simple author, title form rather than the full descriptive entry. Desirable elements were author, title, grade of Braille, imprint, edition, number of volumes, and date of transcription. The feasibility of developing methods of issuing such a catalog on IBM punchcards was indicated.

Development of the Regional Library System and Growth of the Service

DONALD G. PATTERSON, *Chief*

Division for the Blind, Library of Congress

The purpose of my paper is to outline briefly the expansion that has taken place in the program of Books for the Adult Blind since its inception in 1931 and particularly to direct your attention to the problems with which all of us are faced in its administration as a consequence of that growth. Let us start with a look into the past at the library service for the blind which existed before the enactment of the Pratt-Smoot Bill in March of 1931.

Library Service for the Blind Existing in 1930

During the latter part of the nineteenth century libraries for the blind had developed slowly and in a sporadic manner, mainly in schools for the blind or as adjuncts to public libraries—in a few cases State libraries—in areas where a concentration of the blind impressed upon library authorities a responsibility to that segment of its population. The growth of the libraries was slow and laborious, handicapped by limited budgets for providing adequate collections in the relatively expensive medium of books in raised characters, and such collections as were developed were limited in usefulness by such factors as the difficulty the blind encountered in obtaining instruction in reading by touch, the circumstance that the available books were in several different type mediums, some employing dots, others lines, instead of a universal type in which all readers would have competence, and the physical problem of transporting the heavy volumes to the reader.

Gradually through the combined efforts of private associations and public instrumentalities, abetted considerably by a developing consciousness of individual responsibility, some of these obstacles were overcome. Expansion and improvement in education for the blind, plus the development of home teaching facilities, served to increase the number of readers and to augment the potential usefulness of the collections, but at the same time to aggravate the situation of the libraries. The libraries, to a degree, offset their limitations by adopting extremely liberal policies in making their books available to readers beyond their areas of responsibility and by cooperating freely in exchange of materials. As a practical matter it became obvious that larger libraries could accomplish a more effective distribution of their collections

than smaller ones, and as a consequence there was a noticeable trend during the early part of the twentieth century upon the part of libraries of all types, school, municipal or State, to place less emphasis upon their established purposes and make their books available to all blind readers whom they could reach. In effect, they were operating as Regional Libraries although under a self-imposed, uncoordinated system rather than a planned pattern with precise boundaries of responsibility.

Such a development, although serving to alleviate the situation, could not hope to satisfy the growing demands, and the inadequacies of the situation called for organized effort. In the late twenties, at the request of the American Library Association, the American Foundation for the Blind undertook to survey the existing library services for the blind. This survey served to throw the searchlight of public attention upon the situation and revealed much information which proved helpful to those who drafted the Pratt-Smoot Bill and to those who were charged with organizing the new library facilities which its passage made possible.

As a consequence the necessity for Federal support became apparent and the result was the legislation of 1931 setting up a program of Books for the Adult Blind to be administered by the Library of Congress.

Program of Books for the Adult Blind Initiated by the Pratt-Smoot Bill

The Pratt-Smoot Bill authorized an appropriation of \$100,000 per year to be expended to provide reading material for the blind. Congress soon took cognizance of the fact that only about 25 percent of the blind are capable of learning to read by touch to a degree necessary for effective reading, by an amendment which provided for the production of books in recorded form, an idea that Edison had conceived in 1878.

Basis of Selection of Libraries for the Regional System

Although this enactment has frequently been referred to as having marked a turning point in library service for the blind, it did not, as a matter of fact, result in any revolutionary changes insofar as established methods were concerned. It operated, on the contrary, more to implement developments that had been going on for some time. Although the program called for the distribution of books through a system of Regional Libraries designed to provide national coverage, we find that in the selection of libraries through the cooperative efforts of the American Library Association, the American Foundation for the Blind and the Library of Congress, preference was given in the main, and with sound logic, to the same libraries that formerly had demonstrated an interest in developing services for the blind, had established contacts with the blind readers in their areas, and possessed the experience and know-how to proceed without interruption in the execution of the new program. In short, the Federal support made available by this legislation operated to supplement existing collections, to implement established opera-

tions and to extend, rather than initiate, the Nation's library services for the blind.

Expansion of the Regional System by Addition of Libraries

Nineteen libraries were selected to initiate the program, as follows:

Georgia Library Commission, Atlanta.

Texas State Library, Austin.

Department of Books for the Blind, Chicago Public Library.

Cincinnati Library Society for the Blind, Cincinnati Public Library.

Department for the Blind, Cleveland Public Library.

Denver Public Library.

Department for the Blind, Public Library, Lothrop Branch, Detroit.

Library of Hawaii, Honolulu.

Library for the Blind, New York Public Library, New York City.

Library for the Blind, New York State Library, Albany.

Department for the Blind, The Free Library of Philadelphia.

Division for the Blind, Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh.

Library for the Blind, California State Library, Sacramento.

Michigan Employment Institution for the Blind, Saginaw, Mich.

Department for the Blind, St. Louis Public Library.

Department for the Blind, Seattle Public Library.

Service for the Blind, Library of Congress.

National Library for the Blind, Washington, D. C.

Perkins Institution for the Blind, Watertown, Mass.

All of these are still active in the program with the exception of The National Library for the Blind, Washington, D. C., which has, within the last 3 years, been merged with the Library of Congress, and the Georgia Library Commission which was replaced in the program by the Atlanta Public Library which, in turn, was succeeded within the last 6 months by the Georgia State Library. Within a few years of the inception of the program, additional libraries were set up in Los Angeles, Omaha, Portland (Ore.), New Orleans, Faribault (Minn.), Oklahoma City, Salt Lake City, and Jacksonville (Ill.). For a number of years the Regional Libraries remained at 26. Two years ago a twenty-seventh library was established in Daytona, Fla., and a twenty-eighth library is now in process of organization at Lincoln, Neb.

Growth of the Service in Terms of Collections, Readers, and Circulation

Let us direct our attention for a moment to the library service offered immediately prior to 1931, with a mixed feeling possibly of justifiable pride at the advances made under the program and of apology that we have not made greater progress, but certainly with a profound respect for the accomplishments of individual libraries which provided a substantial basis for our program's point of departure and achieved so much with so little with which to work.

We must of necessity depend upon estimates since full statistics are not available. For this picture we have used the Statistical Report of the American Library Association's Committee on Work with the Blind for the calendar year 1931. The report indicates that there were 25 libraries serving blind readers in the United States and Canada and the library having the maximum Braille collection of 18,000 volumes gave a nation-wide service; four of the other libraries having approximately 15,000 Braille volumes each also served readers in all other States upon request. All 25 libraries had a total content of 157,304 volumes in both grades of Braille; 124,900 volumes in grade 1½ and about one-fourth that number (32,395 volumes) in grade 2, the latter, mostly British Grade 2 purchases from the National Institute for the Blind in London. There were 42,462 Moon type books available, a number greater by 10,000 volumes than the available books in grade 2 Braille.

Summarizing the increase during the program at 5 year periods we find that in 1936, 1,132 titles (242,192 volumes) of Braille and 269 titles or 16,740 containers of Talking Books had been produced. At the close of 1941, 984 titles (180,911 volumes) of Braille and 429 titles (56,977 containers) of Talking Books had been added and in the next 5 years through 1946, 846 titles (265,276 volumes) of Braille and 649 titles (66,556 containers) of Talking Books were provided. From 1947 to June 30, 1951, 804 titles of Braille books (250,836 volumes) and 600 titles (72,652 containers) of Talking Books were produced, a grand total in these media for distribution over the 20 year period of 3,766 titles of Braille books (939,215 volumes) and 1,947 titles (212,925 containers of Talking Books).

Impact of the Growth upon Operations of Regional Libraries

It would not require a great exercise of imagination upon the part of even the uninitiated to visualize the impact of the increases just summarized upon operations in the Regional Libraries. Doubtless I will arouse a specter that has caused many a sleepless night to the Regional Librarians in my audience, but I will ask them to bear with my account for the benefit of the other listeners.

First, and perhaps most important, is the problem of space. In the early years the libraries which undertook to render this service absorbed without much difficulty the increase of the collections and found space and shelving for the modest accretion of Talking Book containers of records for perhaps the first 5 or 6 years. But I can well imagine they began to view the situation with alarm in 1946, 10 years after the advent of the Talking Book, when the collections had expanded by nearly 10,000 volumes of Braille and nearly 2,500 containers of records. And now with 11,298 volumes of Braille and approximately 8,000 containers of records added they are truly faced with storage problems of considerable magnitude. What is the solution? Warehouses with consequent rental costs? Diverting of inactive titles to regional storage? These questions require careful and expert consideration.

A second problem is that of personnel. Doubtless some increase in circulation as a result of growth in the number of readers or borrowers served could

be absorbed by just working a little harder, but when the increase reaches as it did in 1946 (27,300 readers) and 1951 (40,600 readers), there seems to be, with all due regard for possible refinements in procedures or increased efficiency with experience, no other answer than increase in personnel, and increase in personnel means increased costs.

Means to Relief Employed by Regional Libraries

How have the Regional Libraries responded to this impact upon their services? I can truly say, and with a deep feeling of appreciation and gratitude, that somehow or other they have managed, in spite of limited budgets, to keep abreast of the demands upon them. I am confident that in most, if not all cases, the Regional Libraries have recognized the increase in service as a logical and hoped for development, and have managed to squeeze the necessary funds out of their budgets. But with each year the effort must be greater and the sacrifice of some other library function having compelling claims more painful. We do not have statistics on the increased costs, nevertheless you Regional Librarians do have them.

The evidence would indicate that to date you have accepted the increased costs to the constituency from which you derive your support, with resignation, but have felt the necessity of receiving a contribution in proportion to the readers served beyond such areas. In each instance where you have brought the matter to the attention of the authorities in other areas served, they have apparently recognized the logic of your position. Two alternative methods have been employed to provide you with relief. In certain areas they have elected to relieve you of your responsibility by setting up their own libraries to serve their readers. In others they have preferred to continue existing services, but on a contractual basis, reimbursing you for such services. Presumably local circumstances affect the situations. Libraries fortunate enough to have liberal endowments do not feel the same pressure that others dependent entirely upon tax revenues do, but the experience to date has been sufficient to pose the question whether the existing framework of Regional Libraries should not be examined in the light of this fiscal burden.

Services Appropriate to the Program of Books for the Adult Blind

In conclusion I would like to make a few remarks relative to future developments of the program. The program is essentially a loan operation by congressional authorization and in that aspect we are concerned only with efforts to improve and extend its usefulness. Our objectives are to expand it to reach more readers, to make it a more effective one in terms of selection of titles, quality of records, improvements in reproducers, and facilitation of operations.

Another aspect of the services is bibliographical and reference service. This has developed largely as an adjunct to our main operations, but we believe that it is a logical outgrowth and a responsibility which, as the national library, we should recognize and accept. We know of no other organization so well

equipped to assemble and disseminate information derivable from printed sources. We will be faced with such calls upon us anyway, and it is our purpose to extend and systematize our service in this respect, with a view to offering a bibliographical and reference service in all matters relating to activities for the blind of a general character not more appropriately the responsibility of other constituted governmental agencies.

Another area is that of implementing programs, such as special recording and handcopying of books in Braille. We feel that in these areas we can be most effective by lending support to programs which have been already established since our appropriation will not permit the expenditure of funds for these purposes without prejudicing the established program. We can, however, aid such endeavors by assisting with cataloging or other library operations or by making available the benefits of our technical advice.

Summary of Discussion Following Mr. Patterson's Paper

The questions of desirable or necessary reorganization of the Regional Library system was recognized as requiring much more careful and realistic study than could be given it in 2 days of Conference discussion. It was suggested that an advisory committee, representative of the interests assembled, be appointed by the Librarian of Congress to formulate a statement on reorganization, the appropriate source of financial support for increased needs and more effective operations within a framework of expanded service regardless of whether it would be more efficient to function with a diminished number of Regional Libraries or expanded to include 48 State libraries.

The advantages of Federal aid in insuring or contributing to uniformity of standards and the value of uniform standards for basing computation of costs and a more effective allocation of funds were emphasized. There was some sentiment in favor of pressing for increased State rather than Federal support in view of the existing ratio of Federal and State support. The need for teamwork and cooperation—on the part of agencies within the program and volunteer groups having implementing programs—is important.

The proposed committee could receive advice from the Library of Congress on local reorganization of library facilities for the blind with its possible redistribution of areas of responsibility. The value of an operational manual for the program would be a useful instrument for the State Agencies in justifying their budget needs. It would offer convincing evidence, for example, that a specific library might be substandard in staff or space, or otherwise below standard.

The proposal for an operational manual for the program raised the question of how it should be prepared. Should each librarian present a version describing his own operations and all of them be used as the basis for a consolidated manual? Should it be a joint operation by urban libraries, rural libraries, libraries in schools for the blind? Or should a committee be appointed to produce one? There was expression both in favor of limiting such a manual to opera-

tions of the Regional Libraries and for including the operations of State Agencies.

In conclusion, there was the question of future procedure in the program: whether to have such a conference at irregular or regular intervals to coordinate varied but related activities, or to continue to go separate ways, using correspondence for necessary liaison.

Significant Steps in the Development of the National Talking Book Program for the Blind

LAWRENCE W. GUNTHER, *Assistant Chief*
Division for the Blind, Library of Congress

Although the Library of Congress has been engaged in providing reading matter to the blind for more than 50 years it is only 17 years since the Talking Book service was commenced, so that what we say here tonight must be considered only a part of the first chapter of the history of the Talking Book service. The story of the current Talking Book service is told by way of performance on a daily basis, but the story of the experimentation, research and development in making it what it is today is extremely interesting. Picture the American Foundation for the Blind with a great idea but with limited financial resources necessary for experiment. Then, after it has succeeded in communicating its enthusiasm to the Congress, and secured financial help to be administered by the Library of Congress it remains today as an integral part of an accomplished program which makes life worthwhile to thousands of our fellow citizens who would otherwise be without recreational devices of any kind. The Congress of the United States recognizing the value of the program continued to give encouragement to the Talking Book program by increasing the Library's appropriation from \$100,000 in 1931 to \$1,000,000 in 1948. This annual appropriation has since remained constant. In the years after 1935, the American Printing House for the Blind became an important part of the program in the recording of Talking Books together with the American Foundation. Commercial manufacturers were invited into the program in 1947 for both the manufacture and repair of Talking Book machines, and in 1948 the National Bureau of Standards accepted the responsibility for research and development in the matters connected with the overall program. To date this is the story of the Library's program for providing Talking Books to the adult blind of the United States, its Territories and insular possessions.

The history of the development of a national Talking Book service for the blind is the story first, of close cooperation between the American Foundation for the Blind, the American Printing House for the Blind, and the Library of Congress. They foresaw the possibilities and laid sound foundations for a great public service and constructed its plan of operations. These were achievements characterized by real foresight, sagacity and constructive ability. As such

they deserve and will receive due attention during our discussions this evening. Second, the builders of the program as represented by the manufacturers of our most recently developed Talking Book machines and their contemporaries in the recording field, alleviated our problems by putting their time and money into the promotion of this unique enterprise. They will also be heard from this evening on subjects pertaining to their respective contributions.

There is at the present time an unwritten but defined policy directly attributable to the past efforts of those taking part in this program this evening to carry out the dreams of those responsible for the program's inception to construct, maintain and operate a national Talking Book service, so that within the boundaries of the continental and territorial limits of the United States, no adult blind person, who so desires, will be without efficient and adequate Talking Book facilities. At the same time it provides encouragement, leadership and inspiration to our friends in other countries to do likewise for similar segments of their populations. Characteristic of our early predecessors was their foresight, and recent experience has proved that we must follow in their steps by working constantly to maintain a useful and reliable degree of standardized uniformity between playback machines, needles and the Talking Book records. To this end the National Bureau of Standards is devoting its principal efforts in our behalf.

Now let us see how, in less than 17 years adult blind of our country have benefitted from the Library's Talking Book program. During the year 1950 from among the 1,800 titles which have been recorded on the Talking Books, 31,000 adult blind readers, resident in the United States, its Territories and insular possessions, were served through the facilities of our 28 Regional Distributing Libraries, approximately 387,368 different books, making an average of better than 12 titles per blind reader during the year.

We here tonight consider it a distinct privilege to have been given the opportunity to give full publicity to the program's aims and its plans for future operations in the technological field of sound recording and matters related thereto.

Report on American Foundation for the Blind Talking Books: Records and Machines

CHARLES H. WHITTINGTON, *Executive Assistant*

American Foundation for the Blind, Inc.

When the idea of reading unabridged editions of books on phonograph records was developed by the American Foundation for the Blind, the basic concept of a disc to be recorded at 33 1/3 revolutions per minute, engraved at 150 lines to the inch was practically revolutionary at the time. In 1934, there were 3 people in the original Talking Book Department of the American Foundation for the Blind.

The equipment used in recording these early discs was, in part, designed and built by a member of the Foundation's recording staff. There were two recording machines with their associated cutters and amplifiers, one studio and a "staff" of 4 or 5 readers, whose voices were recorded on wax masters by the direct microphone to machine method. It is interesting to note that the late Alexander Woolcott was one of the first readers, and our archives still contain his inimitable readings of his own works, and others. John Knight, who is still a popular favorite, started as one of the readers. Since he was a member of the Equity Board he was instrumental in our getting high-priced readers at a figure much lower from that usually charged by Equity.

The method of producing Talking Book records remained rather static at the Foundation until January 1950 when the direct microphone to wax master method was discarded in favor of tape and lacquer. This meant mainly that the errors on the part of the reader or the recording staff which had meant throwing out the ruined wax master and starting over, could be eliminated. Since tape could be edited and corrected, the reader could stop when he made a mistake and commence again, and when his reading was sent to the recording department to be transferred to a lacquer master, it was a perfect reading. We found that our retakes were cut by 40 percent in the recording room, and that the reader was able to produce almost 2 for 1 the number of masters in a given time as formerly.

Another development worthy of mention here is the 10-inch recording with 205 lines to the inch. The entire Bible has been read by Alexander Scourby on these discs. At one time the Foundation tried to interest the Library of Congress in changing to the smaller discs and the finer pitch for all Talking Books, but a subsequent survey of blind users of the books seemed to indicate a reluctance to make the change.

On the subject of Talking Book machines: as there was no Federal appropriation for the manufacture of Talking Book reproducers at the time of the first records, the Foundation undertook the manufacture of a machine suitable to playing back these records for those organizations and individuals who wished to purchase them. The early machine used a standard radio chassis modified to include an input for an electric pick-up of the magnetic type. Early models included two speed motors (78 and 33 1/3 r.p.m.) in both a.c. and a.c.-d.c. types, a spring-driven machine and a motor-driven type without an amplifier. This last model incorporated the usual electric magnetic type pick-up which provided enough output to listen to recordings by earphones. During the first year of machine manufacture, several hundred machines were constructed and sold.

When the December 1935 to June 1942 WPA project was directed to make machines for the Government, the Foundation supplied the key personnel and supervised the manufacture of the reproducing machines. During the four years or so that this project existed, upwards of 25,000 machines of a standard type based on the Foundation model, but without a radio, were produced. The project packaged around 50 million needles during its lifetime (20 million in 1 year). This group also made special reinforced envelopes for the Library of Congress, repaired thousands of machines, employed as many as 35 blind workers.

Through the years, the Foundation has engaged in constant research in the field of recording and processing. Whenever some new equipment or idea proved successful and could be used to produce a better recording, the Foundation made certain to adopt and adapt these ideas wherever possible.

The same may be said to be true in the matter of the Foundation-constructed reproducers. Pick-ups, needles, motors, loud-speakers and so forth were all being purchased and tested, continually, in order to produce a better machine in the same price field. However, now that we are convinced that the need can be met elsewhere, the American Foundation for the Blind will discontinue the manufacture of Talking Book reproducers on December 31, 1951.

We will, I hope, still be making Talking Book records for the blind when the department is asked to submit a similar report to some similar meeting in the year 2051.

Talking Book Record Program: American Printing House for the Blind

WILLIAM WATKINS, *Production Engineer*
American Printing House for the Blind, Inc.

We are pleased that the Division for the Blind, Library of Congress has asked a representative of the American Printing House to give you a brief report on its Talking Book record activities.

Although the American Printing House was founded in 1858 its first Talking Book records were produced in 1936. This of course came after months of thought and planning regarding the financing of the program, and securing the highly skilled personnel for procuring, installing and operating the equipment. The disc recording process, particularly fine line recording, was at that time covered by patents. Patent rights to produce fine line recordings, and the use of professional disc recording equipment on a royalty free basis were finally obtained but not without persistent effort.

At that time the whole recording and record processing industry was very secretive, and technical information from commercial record companies was not obtainable. No current text books covering the subject were available.

Our first small studio and recording room occupied a floor space of only 300 square feet. After the completion of a total of 9 titles for the schools for the blind, in 1938 recording of Talking Books was begun for the Library of Congress. Progress was slow, and in addition to a limited number of juvenile titles for the schools there were only 44 Talking Books supplied the Library of Congress prior to 1940.

To begin with, the recording medium, a firm wax about 11½ inches thick and 13½ inches dia; was purchased. Just prior to recording, these were "shaved" or polished to a mirror finish by a carefully lapped sapphire blade on a wax shaving machine, similar to a precision machinist's lathe, except that it has a vertical spindle.

About 1940 wax molding equipment was set up, and wax compound was developed for casting our own recording wax. The finished recordings on these firm, but fragile heavy cast wax were shipped out to commercial companies to be electroplated into stampers (or processed) and molded into the finished pressings.

This procedure was costly, time-consuming, and highly unsatisfactory be-

cause of inability to establish responsibility for damage to the delicate work in process.

The actual molding of vinyl pressings was begun at American Printing House in 1937. This was started on only two hydraulic presses with two more being added the following year. Much experimental work was necessary with this vinyl compound for molding nonfragile records. It had just begun to be used commercially for molding high quality pressings mostly for radio transcriptions. Here we did obtain help from the vinyl compound supplier who sent a technical representative into our plant. I'm convinced that he along with us learned a great deal about molding records from his vinyl compound.

In 1939 the record pressing department was moved to the second floor of the old building and during the following year 3 more presses were added.

Although much experimental work was done for more than a year, it was not until late 1939 that production electroplating of stampers was performed successfully. The main problems were that of properly metalizing the recorded surface for minimum surface noise and freedom from swish, and producing smooth fine grain hard copper free of "trees" and nodules. Nickel and chrome plating facilities were added to improve stamper wear resistance during molding.

About this time a growing need was felt for record stock compounding equipment, especially for reworking the thermo plastic flash and rejects. A two roll blanking mill and heated plastics mixer were installed to perform the remilling, and later, to make the compound from virgin materials on a small scale.

In the fall of 1939 it became feasible to record in Talking Books form *The Reader's Digest* in cooperation with the Reader's Digest Association. Funds were available to supply about 200 copies of *The Reader's Digest* in the beginning.

In 1941 as more books were being recorded a larger studio and more space for the recording room was made available in the building.

In 1943 the American Printing House processed and pressed vinyl records from some wax recording sent in by the American Foundation for the Blind.

It was reported that during the war all efforts were required to procure scarce copper and plastics and other materials, and keep the department going with limited personnel.

In late 1945 an improved process for preparation of the disc recording medium was installed. This consisted of flowing a smooth even thin layer of wax on a level plate. This eliminated the intricate process of shaving the wax surfaces. Too, less breakage resulted, particularly when machined metal plates were available after the war to replace glass which was first used as the base for flowing wax.

About this time a new Banbury mixing mill for compounding plastics was ordered to replace the small mixer which was further worn and quite inadequate at the time of the Banbury's delivery and installation early in 1946. It

was felt that now the American Printing House had a fully complete and efficient phonograph record plant.

But to accommodate the increasing demand for Talking Book records another studio was built and put into operation in 1946 on the second floor of the old building. A second recording channel and disc recording machine were also installed.

Long before this the Talking Book Department had expanded to the point of pushing other departments out of the building into rented quarters downtown.

Eight years of planning for a new factory building terminated in 1948 with the completion of 33,000 square feet of floor space to house the Braille and Talking Book manufacturing all under one roof.

Modern and efficient facilities were planned and incorporated in the new building for still larger electroplating and record pressing departments.

At present the electroplating department is processing about 100 recordings per week with some additional capacity remaining.

The pressing department with its 10 production record presses is turning out 10,000 pressings per week. This could be increased with the installation of more presses where space in the department has been provided. Although the majority of Talking Books are still furnished to the Library of Congress the Talking Book *Reader's Digest* has increased fivefold to 11,000 pressings per month.

It goes without saying that the record container department was necessarily expanded to keep up with increased record output.

More recently professional magnetic tape recording equipment has been installed to improve overall flexibility, and to alleviate mental tension on the part of the reader. Now a reading error being made during the course of a fifteen foot recording can be corrected without starting from the beginning. This increases reading production and also saves rerecording in case of a processing failure, as the tapes are held until good stampers are made and test pressing proofread and accepted. Too, the hazards of shipping recordings made on tape to be processed are reduced to a minimum. Many of these recordings have been received in the recent past from American Foundation for the Blind and other nonprofit organizations.

As recording techniques are improved American Printing House endeavors to keep abreast by modernizing its equipment and processes. We are now installing a recently developed lateral feed back disc recording cutter and associated amplifier. Also at present other improvements are being incorporated to conform to new Talking Book specifications drawn up for the Library of Congress by the United States Bureau of Standards in collaboration with the American Foundation and American Printing House.

In conjunction with Talking Book records for the schools for the blind in the last 2 years, limited numbers of sound reproducers have been assembled at American Printing House and made available to them.

Currently about 14,000 square feet of floor space is occupied by this complete record plant. With the huge capital outlay for building and equipment for this department, and over 40 regular employees plus a number of part time ones, you can well appreciate the need for an even flow of production throughout every month of the year for efficient and economical operation. This naturally provides more books for the blind with the money available. The Library of Congress has helped greatly to make this needed continuity possible.

When any of you have the opportunity please feel welcome to visit the Printing House. We think a visit through our plant will be of interest to you.

A Summary of Research and Development Activities on Talking Book Systems

RICHARD K. COOK, *Chief*

Sound Section, Mechanics Division, National Bureau of Standards

For the past three years, the Sound Section of the National Bureau of Standards has been working with the Division for the Blind on a project for the improvement of Talking Book Systems. At the time the Bureau undertook the project, the Division for the Blind was confronted with several reproducer, record, and needle problems which required immediate attention. The most urgent of these was the preparation of suitable purchase specifications for Talking Book reproducers. Unfortunately, the reproducer problem could not be entirely separated from the equally pressing needle and record problem. However, using information already available, without an opportunity to look into the equally pressing needle and record problems, a set of performance specifications was prepared which were used as the basis for the purchase of the now familiar Model S reproducer.

The reproducers submitted in 1948 were thoroughly tested for compliance with the first Talking Book reproducer specifications. The results of the tests were disappointing. No machine submitted complied in toto with the requirements of the specifications, even though it was recognized that the requirements of the first specification were extremely lenient. Accordingly, the Model S had to be purchased on a "most for the money" basis.

Before the 1949 specifications were prepared, the various problems pertaining to reproducers were discussed at a conference between manufacturers, and representatives of the Library, the American Foundation for the Blind, the American Printing House for the Blind, and the Bureau. As a result, the specifications were greatly revised and expanded to include numerous suggestions to assist the smaller manufacturers. The reproducers submitted in response to the 1949 invitation-to-bid were a great improvement as concerns the acoustical performance of the machines. Several machines complied fully with the specifications. The Model T machine purchased on the basis of compliance with these specifications proved fairly satisfactory. Although this was a step in the desired direction, it was recognized that further improvements in the acoustic characteristics of reproducers could be made only after the corollary problems of records and needles were solved.

Concurrently with the development of specifications for Talking Book reproducers, it was necessary to look into the needle problem. Talking Book

records were being worn out at an alarming rate partly because of the excessively heavy pickups on the older machines, partly because of improper needles, and partly because of the records supplied to the blind users. Investigations of needles and record wear led to several temporary needle specifications which eventually led to the adoption of the semi-permanent osmium tipped needle.

The problem of standardization of the acoustic and mechanical characteristics of Talking Book records also became crucial. After a considerable amount of work on record wear and a study of the most appropriate acoustic and record characteristics, interim specifications for Talking Book records were prepared and were recently submitted to the American Printing House and the American Foundation for the Blind. The records produced under this specification should be much more pleasing and much more uniform than those produced under the 1940 specification.

Since the beginning of our program we have rather tended to stress performance requirements and let the bidder try to comply with them using designs of his own choosing. Experience has now shown that considerable detail in the design requirements must necessarily form a part of future specifications. This will assist the manufacturers in meeting the requirements and will also assure that the Library of Congress will receive more uniformly standardized machines from year to year.

A brief look into the future might be in order. A survey of existing and proposed sound recording and reproducing techniques shows no acceptable new system which would economically replace the present "standard" Talking Book system for several years to come. The economics and practicality of the situation point to continued effort towards improving the disc system.

Two promising improvements have been under recent investigation. One is the use of a very lightweight pick-up using a nonreplaceable, low cost diamond stylus. The purpose of such pick-up and stylus arrangement would be to reduce record wear and to remove the needle problem from the blind user. It appears that a large part of Talking Book record damage is caused by incorrect use of needles. The second item of importance is the use of an unfilled vinyl compound for records. Our tests indicate that such a material has considerably greater resistance to wear than other types of material and yields better over-all performance.

Although a more suitable recording system similar to the so-called Long Play Microgroove System would be more desirable for the Talking Book program, the incompatibility between the 155 lines per inch U shaped groove records produced in the past and the 240 lines per inch U shaped microgroove records now possible presents unusual difficulties. A needle which is suitable for the old 155 line per inch records breaks down the walls of the 240 line microgroove records. However, the interim record specifications have provided for a modified V shaped groove cut at 155 lines per inch which will accept either a 1.0 mil microgroove needle or the currently used 1.8 mil needle. This procedure will eventually lead to the adoption of a full microgroove system after the old type 155 line U shaped groove records are retired.

Finally, the problem of the instantaneous recording system used by the volunteer groups for making embossed recordings for blinded veterans also requires attention. Although considerable time has been devoted to the technical aspects of the problem, an all-out effort in this direction must await a solution of the administrative problems connected with adoption by the Library of a standardized instantaneous recording system.

Participation of Bowen & Co. in the Program of Books for the Adult Blind

LLOYD DANGERFIELD, *Manager*

Bowen & Co.

It is with pleasure that Bowen & Co. welcomes the opportunity to attend this meeting and set forth our part in the manufacture and repair of Talking Book Machines.

It was in 1946 that Bowen & Co. became interested in the blind program when your Mr. Xenophon Smith, the Director of the Division for the Blind, advised us that there was a dire need for new machines, because no machines had been manufactured for several years. You all know that the machines being used at that time had been manufactured by the American Foundation for the Blind, and followed a set pattern. These machines were carefully designed and manufactured to withstand the hard usage that they were subjected to by blind readers. In 1946 the American Foundation for the Blind was not in a position to manufacture new machines. At the same time the National Bureau of Standards had not been engaged to take an active part in this program. In a conference with Mr. Smith, Bowen & Co. was asked to design and build a machine including many features requested by the Division for the Blind. The end result was the series 30,000 machine, with its detachable speaker and long speaker cord, and the microswitch for automatic motor "on" and "off." Its electrical response was designed for easy listening, giving a low distortion and very low hum. At that time the use of a light-weight pick-up arm was not considered. The present day commercial 33½ and 45 r. p. m. records were nonexistent. It was determined more important that a strong durable arm, with a heat resistant pick-up be used.

The manufacture of the series 30,000 machine, after its design approval, became a difficult undertaking, due to the shortage of high grade components necessary for this machine. We made numerous trips to the various component manufacturers in order to expedite delivery. You will recall that during the immediate years following World War II, all electrical items were scarce. We found that the large manufacturers of radios and phonographs had practically taken over all sources of supply. I personally made trips to Chicago, making calls both ways, and in most cases it was the same result: "Sorry, but our capacity is booked for the next year". In many instances the cost of expediting and purchasing an item greatly exceeded the direct cost of the component.

In addition to manufacturing new machines, we were asked to consider the

repair of Talking Book Machines. We visited the American Foundation for the Blind in New York to familiarize ourselves with the many problems to be encountered. We were awarded the repair contract and proceeded to repair machines, some of which had been defective for years and had been in storage. Here again the repair of these old machines became an undertaking. There was no program at that time for scrapping old machines. The shortage of new machines necessitated our repairing machines whenever possible.

From June 1948 to July of this year, Bowen & Co. did not take an active part in the Blind program. At the present time we are repairing Talking Book Machines under a contract ending June 30, 1952. You are all aware of the fact that four different models have been manufactured since 1947. Each model has its own electrical characteristics and design. There are some troubles or breakdowns common to all models, such as slow motors, and case breakage due to rough handling. Under our present repair procedure, machines sent in for repair are not replaced in kind. This policy enables us to give better service. When each lending agency returns machines at its own discretion, we may receive several hundred machines this week and only a few next week. Again, we do not know what model is being returned, which makes the stocking of repair parts a problem.

The purchasing of certain electronic components is becoming more difficult each month. We have to wait as long as 90 days for certain types of tubes. Our present procedure for repairing a machine is as follows:

Each machine is received and tagged with a number.

The Library of Congress is advised weekly of the machines received.

Each machine is carefully inspected to determine the trouble and then repaired.

After the repair, all machines are run for a minimum of 2 hours and then put in stock for shipment.

Some of you may say: "Why is it that we receive a machine that will not work after it has been repaired?" This is possible for several reasons:

- (1) A machine may be roughly handled in transit.
- (2) Electrical components are not guaranteed indefinitely, and a new component may become defective immediately or after a few hours of use.
- (3) An electrical component may become inoperative under heat conditions; in other words, after several hours of continuous use sufficient heat may be built up in the case to cause the component to become defective and then after it cools off to a certain degree, it will work.

There are many other reasons, but you can readily understand why this happens. It would be a great help to the repair center if a small tag could be attached to each machine, stating the trouble. This would immediately give us a clue as to why the machine was returned and eliminate our searching for defects which do not appear on a regular inspection. We realize that this is not possible in all

cases, but if a tag would read: "Slow motor, too much distortion, low volume, stops playing after several hours of use," we would then know the specific causes for which the machine was returned.

Since July 1, we have received 3,500 machines for repair or salvage. We have a competent staff of repair men, and it is our sincere desire to give prompt and efficient service. We always welcome constructive criticism, so please do not hesitate to write us at any time.

Participation of the U. S. Recording Co. in the Program of Books for the Adult Blind

JOSEPH TAIT, *President*

U. S. Recording Co.

The U. S. Recording Co., whom I represent here this evening is most happy and anxious to accept the invitation to talk with, and to report to you this evening. We are very desirous of cooperating in any way possible in the attempt to improve the quality of the Talking Book reproducers, both now when we are the successful competitive bidders, and in the future when we hope to, but possibly may not be the successful bidders.

We recognize and are familiar with the problems relating to the repair and maintenance of the equipments now in the field, and again we offer all of our facilities for the improvement of this service, both at the present time when we are not the successful bidders and for the future for which we have our hopes.

You recognize that the U. S. Recording Co., is a commercial organization, charged with all the duties and responsibilities (that's the big word for taxes and pay roll) but anyway we are charged with all the duties and responsibilities of any other commercial organization in the free and competitive society in which we live.

But despite the commercial aspects that cannot be separated from our participation in the program, we cannot recall a program that has given us greater pride, or feeling of honor, than the role we have been permitted to play in the design and production of Talking Book reproducers for the Blind.

Getting down to cases, we have been manufacturing Talking Book reproducers since 1948, and in that period we have manufactured and distributed more than 33,000 units, exclusive of the many built for private sale to readers. For 3 years, we operated the Federal Repair Center, the organization created for the repair, service and maintenance of the reproducers currently in use, and I believe that our report to you in this respect will be most interesting.

I wish it were possible to report to you the exact percentage of these 33,000 model R, model S, and model T machines manufactured by us, that were returned for service during the contract year of 1950-51. Unfortunately, the records are not kept in that fashion, at least not by us, although our very efficient friends up in the Division can probably tell you right down to the last unit. Anyway, we can relate to you some very interesting facts and figures about the repair program.

Counting every repair, for every conceivable reason, there were during this period a total of 3,600 machines shipped to us for service. This figure includes the old model 10's and 11's sent to us for conversion to a.c./d.c., and the very old spring winds, of which many are still in use, sent to us for actual rebirth. It also includes many machines returned to us for the replacement of a tube, a needle, and the many other expendable components and parts. It includes machines sent to us within our guaranty period where no charge for labor or materials is made. It includes many machines returned to us in error or on the death of a reader, or for any other conceivable reason, whether or not connected with the repair of the machine.

As I said, it includes returns to the Federal Repair Center for every conceivable reason other than the direct retirement and scrapping of machines too old for further use, and the total of all such returns is well under 10 percent of the number of machines in current use.

I am really sorry that I can't say specifically that during this period we repaired X number of our R, S, and T's, but with a total service for all reasons of less than 10 percent of the outstanding machines, some in constant and daily use for over 10 years, some having absolutely nothing wrong with them but requiring conversion for more flexible use, a vast majority requiring nothing more than a part to replace one that has lived its full life, we feel that our efforts to construct as trouble free a machine as is possible have paid off. Just think for a moment, in one full year, less than 10 percent of the machines coming back for any conceivable reason, each machine coming back on an average of not more than once in 10 years. That's what we have been working for. That's what the Division for the Blind of the Library of Congress has been working for, and that's what the National Bureau of Standards has been working for.

We are not finished yet. We feel that the new machine, the model A, will even surpass this record, but we honestly feel that this percentage is considerably lower than any comparable figure for commercial machines where a great many of the minor repairs, adjustments, and replacements are made in the home without the services of a dealer or manufacturer.

We of the U. S. Recording Co. pledge ourselves to keep working, to keep planning, and to keep engineering and designing, to reduce to the barest minimum the necessity for returns for repair or service of any kind.

Now, as to our part in the actual design of the machines now in use and those to be distributed in the near future.

You know, our instructions, and those to the other competitive bidders, are rather simple and complete. The National Bureau of Standards, acting as agent for the Library of Congress, issues specifications and directions. These specs, as we call them, are a bit complicated and involved, but boiled down they simply read, we want the best, the sturdiest, the most compact, the easiest to operate, the simplest to maintain, unit you can devise. Then the Library steps in and says, yes that's what we want, and we want it cheap. We want to distribute two units for every one that is expected of us.

And that is the direction in which we of the U. S. Recording Co. have tried to move. With special emphasis on ease of operation, and simplicity of maintenance, with due regard for weight, transportability and ruggedness, and with particular emphasis on quality of reproduction, ease of listening and fidelity in tone, our engineers and craftsmen have spent thousands of hours in the laboratory and on the drawing boards, testing, planning, discussing, using every trick of the trade possible, to come up with the best machine at the lowest price. We think we are on the right track, but we know we have yet to solve many questions.

But each new design is a step forward towards meeting the ultimate demanded by your very exacting representatives here in Washington. The present machines are smaller and lighter, yet with better quality and more fidelity in tone than any of the preceding models. In this age of inflation and rising costs, the unit cost per machine, both in manufacture and service has shown a constant downward trend.

It is our aim and our hope to continue in that direction. Our goal is to reach that point where the greatest number of readers can enjoy the most improved equipments in this splendid program of Talking Books for the Blind. And to that end, we pledge ourselves and all of the facilities of the U. S. Recording Co.

Equipment for Producing Braille

EDWARD J. WATERHOUSE, *Director*

Perkins Institution for the Blind; *Manager*, Howe Press

Braille Writers

A number of Braille writers have been collected for display here today, some of them nearly 100 years old. Some come from overseas and the remainder from various parts of the United States. This is a representative but by no means complete collection. Except for the Braille slate, the equipment is relatively expensive. Now-a-days writers vary in cost from fifty to one hundred twenty dollars. The machine as we know it, is largely the work of Mr. Frank H. Hall. He was former superintendent of the Illinois School for the Blind, and in 1892 produced his first Braille writer.

Stereotyping Equipment

After producing the Braille writer, Mr. Hall enlarged it into a foot-operated stereotyper, which embossed metal plates instead of paper. There have been many improvements made since in this type of equipment, the most noticeable being the introduction of electric power, and improved plate holders for producing interpoint Braille. Probably the most scientifically designed machine of this type is the new electrically operated stereograph in use at the American Printing House in Louisville.

Printing Equipment

A variety of printing presses are in use to produce Braille from the metal plates. Some of these are standard printing presses, modified for the purpose, and others have been specially built for embossing Braille. Some are high speed presses with automatic feeds used for magazine work.

Disadvantages of Present Equipment

Most Braille writers do what is expected of them with reasonable efficiency. They do everything that a typewriter will do for a seeing person, except that they cannot make carbon copies in the same quantity as a typewriter does, nor can the majority of them write on both sides of a page. (The British, however, have a machine which interpoints and it is on display here tonight.) Just as a typewriter can produce a stencil used in mimeograph work, so the Braille writers are being used in a number of places, for producing a master copy which, when

treated with Uformite serves a similar function to the mimeographing stencil, and from which up to 100 or more copies can be produced.

The stereotyping machine is also relatively efficient. It may well be that it costs less to produce a zinc stereotype plate than it does to set up the similar material in type for ink printing, but whether it costs more or less, it costs too much. That is, the cost is such that in spite of Government subsidies and endowed presses, there is still only a very small amount of material put into Braille compared with the demands of students in the public high schools and in colleges and of the members of various professions.

Printing costs are also high if runs are short. Because of the bulk and expense of Braille paper, it is not practical to run off an ample edition of any title which will take care of all demands. For short runs it takes almost as long to change plates as it does to do the actual printing. Moreover, the cost of keeping the zinc plates in anticipation of further runs is excessive. Zinc is costly and scarce. The plates occupy a lot of storage space and a bundle of 100 of them is heavy and awkward to carry around.

Possible New Techniques

We seem to need a substitute for the metal plates. The material might be transcribed from the print text in the form of embossed paper, or perforated tape, or photographic film. New machines would be needed to produce these masters and to make Braille from them.

Other ways of presenting the Braille to the reader should also be considered. These might include something of the type of the International Business Machines' Braille Reading Device, which is described in literature being distributed at this meeting. Other versions of this type of equipment using photographic film might also be considered.

Conclusion

It seems as though little improvement in Braille service can be expected from the present types of equipment. It is difficult to determine whether the type of equipment hinted at here which will require large sums of money for research, development, and manufacture are necessary. When Braille cannot be obtained, blind readers have other alternatives, and undoubtedly at times they manage without the material they desire.

Report of Resolutions Committee to the National Conference on Library Service for the Blind

The undersigned members of the Resolutions Committee appointed to serve this Conference have carefully noted the many discussions and points which have been brought out during the discussions of the past two days, and we have pleasure in bringing this report to the attention of the Conference.

Speaking for ourselves and for the entire Conference, we wish first of all to express to Dr. Luther Evans, the Librarian of Congress and to its staff in the Division for the Blind, the grateful appreciation of all of us met here for this opportunity at this First National Conference on Library Service for the Blind and for the fruitful discussion which has resulted from this meeting. We sincerely hope that the Librarian of Congress will find it possible to encourage and sponsor future National Conferences of this kind.

Summarizing the views expressed during the Conference we bring to your attention for consideration now the under-noted recommendations:

1. That in view of the many problems now existing and certain to develop in the future with respect to jurisdiction, authority, coordination, etc., the Librarian of Congress be asked to consider the appointment of an advisory committee representative of various areas of library service for the blind to advise him regarding the above-mentioned problems, such committee to meet with Librarian of Congress at convenient intervals.

2. That the Librarian of Congress be asked to give immediate consideration to the following problems, and that he make available to all concerned a progress report with respect to each of these problems at 3-month intervals.

- (1) The need for an adequate book selection and book supply policy and procedure.

- (2) The need for early standardization of needle specifications and supply preferably in the direction of conforming with the present commercial long-playing practice.

- (3) The need to develop, in cooperation with the Post Office Department, authority for a pick-up service, where necessary, for books returned to the lending library.

- (4) The need for a better quality Talking Book machine thoroughly inspected and tested before distribution to the lending agency, and the need for a reproducer of general usefulness adopted to the use of embossed plastic records.

- (5) The need for adequate periodic check-up service to determine sources

of surplus Talking Book reproducers and reading material, and their reallocation or destruction where not in current use.

(6) The need to develop a manual of guidance for agencies and libraries which will bring improved practices and uniformity to services for blind readers.

(7) The need to extend the authority of the library service to the blind to children as provided in H. R. 255 (the O'Toole bill) which is endorsed by this Conference.

(8) The need to improved arrangements for the repair of Talking Book machines.

(9) The need for a central depository for little used reading material.

(10) The need for Library of Congress cards to be supplied for all reading material furnished.

(11) The need for a study of the financial aspects of the program working to the amelioration of the burden now assumed by various distributing agencies and libraries.

(12) The need for information concerning the replacement of broken or missing records.

(13) The need for early publication and distribution of a union catalog of all reading material for the blind.

(14) The need for a central clearing house exchange through which all embossed or recorded titles will be cleared in advance.

(15) The need for consideration of future technological developments and their implication with respect to economic and physical problems.

(16) The need for a strong Division for the Blind to continue within the staff structure of the Library of Congress, certainly at no lesser level than its present strength and if possible with strengthened and improved facilities.

Your Committee appreciates that it has not perhaps included every point which was the subject of discussion but it has made an earnest effort to be conscious of the present needs developed during the course of the Conference. In closing we wish to express in behalf of the Conference our special appreciation to Mr. Clapp for his genial service as moderator and to Mr. Patterson for his sincere and earnest work in the preparation and conduct of this Conference.

Respectfully submitted,

HARRY A. SIMMONS, *Chairman*

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November 20, 1951

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